Grace Communion International-USA

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION MANUAL

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PREFACE: GOVERNANCE STIPULATIONS

Grace Communion International (GCI) is a hierarchically governed organization, which means, among other things, that certain functions and operations of the church as a denomination are delegated by the Board or church executives to its local congregations and ministers or other officials. The denomination has prepared policies and procedures to direct the local congregations in fulfilling these decentralized or delegated functions and operations, including, without limitation, those found in this manual.

It is the intent of GCI that the policies and procedures set forth in this Church Administration Manual are consistent with the denomination's underlying governing and related policy and procedural documents. However, the denomination reserves to itself the sole right to correct, interpret and/or decide the meaning or effect of any statement contained herein.

Various decisions or determinations discussed in this manual and elsewhere are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations. An ecclesiastical decision/determination is one that has spiritual elements or includes spiritual considerations or requires spiritual discernment or judgment. The denominational governance has final authority to determine which decisions or determinations are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations, whether or not they are expressly labeled such in this or any other church statement, but they include, without limitation: the decision to charter a congregation, to remove a congregation's charter, to split or combine congregations, to ordain elders, to change or remove eldership or elder's credentials, and to determine the church membership status of any person. The denominational governance has final authority, in its sole and absolute discretion, to adjudicate any ecclesiastical decision/determination, notwithstanding the fact that some such decisions are provisionally delegated, in this manual or otherwise, to the denomination's elders, congregations, or members in the various roles they do or may possess.

In addition, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, in this document or elsewhere, all employees of GCI, and associated entities, whether they be lay employees or minister employees, are "at will" and may be terminated with or without cause or notice. Procedures set forth in this manual regarding grievance, discipline, and appeal processes for members, affiliates and elders pertain to, and only to, an employee's member or ministerial status, and such procedures are not required for any employment action, including, but not limited to, promotion, demotion, transfer, or termination of employment. Any exceptions to this "at will" status must be made in writing by the board of the entity for which such employee works, specifically naming the employee to be affected, and signed both by a party specifically authorized by that board and by the employee.

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CHAPTER 1
OVERVIEW

1.1 Mission, vision and governance

Grace Communion International (GCI) is a Christian denomination spread across 90 countries. Our mission, *Living and sharing the gospe*l, gives rise to our vision, which is summarized in the phrase *Healthy Church.* This manual describes the system of church governance by which GCI operates within the U.S., with an eye toward helping GCI-USA congregations and denominational ministries pursue the GCI mission and vision in ways that are "fitting and orderly" (1 Corinthians 14:40) in order to maintain the unity of the church (12:12) while building it up (14:12, 26) to follow the Holy Spirit in participating with Jesus Christ in the Father's ongoing mission to the world (9:19-23).

1.2 Core values

It is our intent that all aspects of our governance faithfully reflect the dynamic, creative love and life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as expressed in the world in and through the church. Toward that end, our system of governance is grounded in the following biblically-informed core values:

Ministry for all believers

We believe that God calls and gifts all believers to participate with Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the Father's mission to the world. That participation, with its focus on obedience to Jesus' *Great Commission* to multiply and mature his followers (Matthew 28:16-20), is shaped and motivated by obedience to Jesus' *Great Commandment* to love God and all people (2 Corinthians 5:14-21; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-21).

Team-based leadership

We believe leadership within the church should be structured in ways that facilitate the participation of teams of appropriately called, gifted, equipped and supervised leaders who, in love, work collaboratively in serving others. We see this team-based approach to leadership as a reflection of the loving communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Leaders are faithful stewards and servants

We believe God calls and gifts church leaders to be faithful stewards of the gospel (1 Corinthians 4:1) and servants of the people they are called to lead. Though devoted and zealous, such leaders are never abusive. Instead, they are motivated by Jesus' love for God and for people (Mark 10:42-45).

Spirit-formed, life-changing environments

We believe the church is called to provide Spirit-formed, life-changing environments (venues) where people are helped to encounter Jesus and join with him in his disciple-making ministry to advance the Father's mission to the world. That ministry is a "journey with Jesus" that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, leads to the multiplication of believers, workers, leaders, ministries and churches.

1.3 Primary objectives

Grounded in these core values, our system of church governance has five primary objectives:

1) To conform with scriptural examples and principles relevant to structuring the church.
2) To operate out of a spirit of openness, service, humility and mutual accountability.
3) To provide clear expectations within a context of empowerment.
4) To protect all involved from spiritual harm.
5) To maintain unity in doctrine and theology while providing flexibility to respond to the Holy Spirit's creative work in shaping our ministry commitments and practices.

1.4 Leadership offices

Fundamental to GCI's system of church governance is the ministry of people who, in church leadership positions, administer our system in faithful response to the Holy Spirit's superintending direction. In the New Testament church, these designated leaders included apostles, evangelists and prophets (leaders who traveled in the service of multiple congregations); along with overseers (bishops), elders, pastor-teachers and deacons (leaders who served within congregations).

In Acts 6:1-6, the apostles called upon churches to identify leaders who were appointed (perhaps as deacons) by the apostles. The apostle Paul appointed elders (Acts 14:23), authorized Titus to do so (Titus 1:5) and implied that Timothy should choose overseers (1 Timothy 3:1-7).

From these and other New Testament examples, we conclude that in the early church, leaders with various titles were recognized, appointed, equipped and supervised by a leadership structure that often extended beyond local congregations. We seek to follow these examples in structuring our leadership offices, always with a focus on faithfully serving member congregations, the denomination, and the larger body of Christ, all for the sake of the world.

1.5 Accountability relationships

Scripture and experience tell us that appropriate accountability is essential for church health. That accountability begins with each Christian's personal accountability to the Father, Son and Spirit, then extends to accountable relationships between members, between leaders and members, between leaders at various levels, and between congregations and the denomination. Though the Bible does not mandate a particular accountability (governance) structure, it does demonstrate the use of various systems, with even greater variety emerging down through the centuries of Christian history.

1.6 GCI governance system

GCI is a *hierarchically governed* denomination with church leaders appointed and supervised by designated ecclesiastical supervisors (overseers). For example, in GCI's U.S. congregations, the Lead Pastor (or equivalent) is appointed and supervised by a Regional Director who reports to a Superintendent, who reports to the denomination's President.

This accountability to one's supervisor/overseer is enhanced and balanced by governance policies and procedures that facilitate meaningful input to leaders from those they lead. For example, GCI-USA chartered churches have an Advisory Council that provides ongoing advice and counsel to the Lead Pastor and other Pastors/Elders serving within the congregation. Then there are forums and other channels of communication by which Pastors and other members of congregations are enabled to communicate with the denomination (typically through the Regional Director). GCI's governance system also includes a means for dealing with breaches of duty and the conflict that sometimes arises in accountable relationships. In these and other ways, GCI's system is *hierarchical* in structure while being *collegial* in tone and application.

CHAPTER 2
MEMBERSHIP

Though membership in the universal church (the one body of Christ) is not defined by or limited to a single denomination or congregation, it is vital that believers, when possible, participate as members in local congregations. This chapter outlines the nature of membership within GCI's congregations (designated as churches and fellowship groups).

2.1 Two membership categories

GCI congregations minister to all who, coming in peace, desire to participate in the life of the congregation. At their request, and in accordance with the policies set out in this chapter, these people may become members in one of two membership categories: *affiliates* and *members*.

Membership status is typically granted by the congregation and resides in both the congregation and denomination. Membership status is automatically transferred between congregations when an affiliate or member in good standing relocates and notifies the new congregation of their desire to participate as a member. Individuals who are unable to participate in a local GCI congregation may request membership in the GCI "national church," which is administered from GCI's International Home Office in Charlotte, North Carolina.

2.1.1 ***Affiliates*** are either non-baptized believers or baptized believers who, through attendance and/or financial support, affiliate with a GCI congregation but do not desire or are not qualified to become a member. Affiliate status often precedes becoming a member. Affiliates younger than age 16 are designated as *youth affiliates*.

2.1.2 ***Members*** are baptized believers who request and are accepted as members, having committed themselves to participation in a GCI congregation through attendance, financial support and service. Members younger than age 16 are designated as *youth members*.

2.2 Privileges extended to all

The worship services sponsored by GCI congregations are open to all who come in peace (with limited exceptions due to church discipline). As they are able, congregations offer to all who ask the spiritual care, counsel, prayer and equipping provided through their ministries. Access to special services (such as financial assistance) and ceremonies (such as weddings and funerals) is extended first to members and affiliates, then to others as congregational resources permit and as deemed appropriate on a case-by-case basis. The right to file grievances and appeals is extended only to members and affiliates (see chapter 5). When communion is served in a worship service, all who profess belief in Christ as their Lord and Savior, regardless of age, membership, or baptism status, are welcome to partake.

2.3 Privileges extended to members

The following services and privileges generally are extended only to those classified as GCI members:

- Advanced training for leadership in a congregational or denominational office.
- Designation as a leader in a congregational or denominational office including appointment to the offices of Ministry Leader and Elder.
- The right to nominate others for leadership in the congregation where the individual is an active member.
- Youth members have all the privileges of members, excluding eligibility to be appointed as Ministry Leaders or Elders.

2.4 Responsibilities of affiliates

GCI affiliates (including youth affiliates) commit to living and growing in Christian community in accordance with the following stipulations:

2.4.1 Acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, which may or may not have been confirmed through water baptism.

2.4.2 General agreement with *The Statement of Beliefs of Grace Communion International*, avoiding divisive behavior in any areas of disagreement.

2.4.3 Support of the leaders of the denomination and of the congregation where the member regularly attends.

2.4.4 Behaving in ways that show Christian love for those who attend their congregation.

2.4.5 Conformance with GCI policies and

procedures related to church discipline as set forth in chapter 5 of this manual.

2.5 Responsibilities of members

GCI members (including youth members) commit to living and growing in Christian community in accordance with the following stipulations:

2.5.1 Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord confirmed through water baptism (or other means such as confirmation when the individual had been baptized as an infant).

2.5.2 Support of the GCI congregation they attend, as evidenced by active attendance, prayer, service and financial giving ("active" is subject to ecclesiastical determination related to mitigating circumstances in the life of the member including health, income and commuting distance).

2.5.3 Behavior that reflects general agreement with *The Statement of Beliefs of Grace Communion International*, avoiding divisiveness in areas of disagreement, and seeking pastoral counsel to discuss any areas of significant disagreement.

2.5.4 Support of the leadership of the denomination and of the congregation in which membership is held.

2.5.5 Behaving in ways that show Christian love for those who attend their congregation, and that offer a Christ-like witness in the community.

2.5.6 Conformance with GCI policies and procedures related to church discipline as set forth in chapter 5 of this manual.

2.6 Becoming an affiliate

Affiliates are those who, with their consent, are entered on a list of affiliates within the GCI congregation where they attend. Generally, the Lead Pastor of a congregation appoints to affiliate status those who are fairly regular in attendance and/or fairly regular in donating to the congregation. Granting of affiliate status is not generally announced publicly, though a Lead Pastor may choose to do so with the affiliate's permission.

The congregation that makes the appointment registers the affiliate's status using the online member records system. Minors (those under age 18) may be accepted as affiliates (including youth affiliates) only with the approval of a parent or legal guardian. It is appropriate for the Lead Pastor to invite youth affiliates at age 16 into an adult level of affiliation.

2.7 Becoming a member

Members are those who request and are accepted into membership based on the individual's commitment as evidenced by compliance with the aforementioned stipulations. Congregations are encouraged to routinely publicize the process for acceptance into membership, inviting potential candidates to apply by contacting the Lead Pastor. Applicants for membership should then be counseled by the Lead Pastor (or other pastoral leader) concerning the privileges and responsibilities of being a member outlined in this chapter.

One of the requirements for membership is water baptism (GCI accepts and practices both adult and infant baptism). Because baptism pictures both communion with Christ and with his body, the church, it is appropriate (though not mandatory) that baptisms be performed in the presence of the congregation where the person being baptized will attend. In GCI, baptism is normally by full immersion in water (with exceptions made for medical or other extenuating circumstances and in baptizing infants).

If a candidate for membership has been baptized in another Christian denomination or congregation, they need not be re-baptized unless they personally are convicted of the need to do so. If an applicant for membership has not been baptized, they may become a member upon such baptism.

Minors (those under age 18) may be baptized and/or become members (including youth members) only with the approval of a parent or legal guardian. When a youth under age 12 is baptized, a parent or legal guardian must be present at the ceremony. It is appropriate for the Lead Pastor to invite youth members at age 16 into adult membership.

Note: special arrangements are made for members of non-chartered fellowship groups to have membership in the GCI National Church—see section 3.6.1.

2.8 Transfer of membership

If a member or affiliate in good standing relocates from one GCI congregation to another, their

membership or affiliate status will be transferred to the new congregation at their request and with the participation of both the receiving and the former ("sending") Lead Pastor.

2.9 Leaving membership

The participation of members and affiliates in GCI and its congregations may be ended or reclassified in the following ways:

2.9.1 A member may be reclassified as an **affiliate** when they reduce their level of participation in a GCI congregation from that of member to that of affiliate. Such circumstances may be addressed between the member and the Lead Pastor, and the membership records will be adjusted accordingly.

2.9.2 A member will be reclassified as a **former member** when they cease all GCI participation for a period of a year or more, or when they request removal from membership.

2.9.3 A member or an affiliate will be reclassified as **disassociated** (disassociated member or disassociated affiliate) if their member or affiliate status is revoked by ecclesiastical action of the church for the disciplinary reasons outlined in chapter 5between the member and the Lead Pastor, and the membership records will be adjusted accordingly.

CHAPTER 3
CONGREGATIONS

3.1 Benefits of being a GCI congregation

GCI congregations derive multiple benefits from being part of the GCI denominational family:

- **An incarnational Trinitarian foundation**. GCI beliefs and practices are grounded in two core doctrines of the historic, orthodox Christian faith: the Trinity and the Incarnation.
- **Collegial, family-like connections** with other congregations through shared beliefs, theology, mission and vision.
- **Training/education** provided by GCI's denominational ministries, which equip GCI congregations for participation in the mission of our triune God in the world.
- **Administrative support** provided (as applicable) by GCI Home Office services including legal, insurance, employee benefit-payroll administration, computer and other forms of technical support.
- **Support and supervision** of the congregation's primary pastoral leader provided by the congregation's Regional Director.

3.2 Becoming a GCI congregation

Congregations become part of Grace Communion International as church plants or when established congregations join the denomination.

3.2.1 Planting a GCI church

GCI-USA actively facilitates the starting of new congregations through its church planting initiatives.

3.2.2 Joining the denomination

GCI welcomes into the denomination established non-GCI congregations that embrace GCI's theological vision, core doctrines, sense of mission, and system of church governance (outlined in this manual and in the companion *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*). Acceptance into the denomination is typically acknowledged through credentialing of the congregation's clergy and granting to the congregation a GCI charter as either a chartered church or a chartered fellowship group (see below).

3.3 Three types of GCI congregations

GCI has three ways to structure and designate its congregations in the United States:

- **Chartered churches.** These congregations hold weekly worship services where the average weekly attendance is 15 or more adult and/or youth members/affiliates. These congregations provide multiple ministries and operate using the GCI-USA standard financial management system.
- **Chartered fellowship groups**. These congregations may meet less often than weekly and average less than 15 in attendance. Though the number of ministries they offer is limited, they operate using the standard financial management system.
- **Non-chartered fellowship groups**. These congregations are similar to chartered fellowship groups, but do not receive, account for, receipt, or spend tax deductible donations locally and therefore are not subject to the standard financial management system. Membership of those who attend these groups resides in the GCI National Church. This frees non-chartered fellowship groups from much of the record keeping chores required of chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups.

3.4 Requirements specific to chartered congregations

To receive and maintain their GCI charter, chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups meet the requirements noted below (with certain differences noted between churches and fellowship groups). Due to the varying sizes and configurations of these congregations, there are numerous (and flexible) ways to meet the requirements. If a congregation is unable to do so, the Regional Director will help them explore options for coming into compliance.

3.4.1 Provide congregational leaders

All chartered congregations have pastoral leaders who help nurture and lead the congregation. In all cases, one of these leaders serves as the congregation's *Contact Person* who is the primary point of connection between the congregation and the denomination (see 3.7). In addition, there are the other leaders noted below.

3.4.1.1 Leaders specific to chartered churches

Within chartered churches, there typically are two types of pastoral leaders:

- ***Elders***, who being granted this title through ordination, are appointed to serve the congregation as a Lead, Associate or Assistant Pastor (see 3.8).
- ***Ministry Leaders***, who being granted this title through commissioning, are appointed to lead one or more of the congregation's core ministries (see 3.9).

The primary pastoral leadership in chartered churches is provided in one of three ways: a Lead Pastor, two Co-Pastors, or a Pastoral Team. These leaders participate in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program as outlined in Appendix E.

Chartered churches led by a Lead Pastor or by Co-Pastors have an *Advisory Council* that provides advice and counsel to the Pastor(s) (see 3.13). Chartered churches led by a Pastoral Team need not have an Advisory Council since the team fills that role.

3.4.1.2 Leaders specific to chartered fellowship groups

Given their small size, chartered fellowship groups do not have Advisory Councils. Their primary pastoral leader is referred to as the group's *Facilitator* (if the Facilitator is an Elder, they may use the title of *Pastor*). All prospective fellowship group facilitators must fill out an application form, which includes passing a criminal background check prior to their appointment.

Though fellowship group facilitators are not expected to participate in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program (see Appendix E), they are encouraged to do so (GCI encourages all pastoral leaders to participate in continuing education).

3.4.2 Provide worship services

Chartered churches are to hold worship services each week (with only rare exceptions). Chartered fellowship groups sometimes meet less frequently.

3.4.3 Provide financial management

All chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups are to have in place the standard financial management system stipulated in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*. That system includes a Finance Committee (see 3.14) with a Church Treasurer and Lead Counter. To meet operational expenses (including the denominational apportionment), these congregations must generate sufficient operating income through donations, fund raisers, etc. They then are to manage that income utilizing the standard financial system.

3.4.4 Provide standard reporting

All chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups are to submit to the denomination the following reports, filed at online.gci.org. (Note: non-chartered fellowship groups are not required to submit these reports).

- **Monthly congregation report.** The Contact Person files with the denomination a report by the 15th of each month. This report summarizes details concerning assemblies of the congregation for the previous month and provides information concerning church health and development.
- **Financial reports.** The Contact Person, typically through the congregation's Treasurer, files with the denomination quarterly and year-end financial reports (including reporting on required audits). These reports are due by the deadlines and with the content noted in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*.

3.4.5 Provide safe and healthy assemblies

While no congregation can perfectly ensure the physical safety and health of its members and guests, each should use care to protect individuals in congregational assemblies (worship services, social activities, etc.) from bodily harm. This means taking care not to expose people to potentially harmful circumstances including food poisoning and infectious diseases. Congregations are prohibited from transporting members, affiliates and guests on church-sponsored trips in 15 passenger van models produced prior to 2018. This includes vans that have been made 12 passenger vans by removing the back

seat. Usage may be permitted for models produced 2018 and after if the driver has a commercial license or has undergone a safe driving course, and follows GCI's insurance carrier's safety requirements. Please contact humanresources@gci.org for more information.

3.5 Naming congregations

When initially naming or when renaming a congregation, GCI-USA asks its churches and fellowship groups to utilize a name that couples the denomination's name with the congregation's geographic location. Here are two examples:

- *Grace Communion International, Mapleton*
- *Grace Communion Mapleton* (Note: when used in informal communication, these names may be foreshortened to "GCI Mapleton" or "GC Mapleton").

The name a congregation preliminarily select is to be submitted to the Regional Director for approval before the name is used publicly. With that approval, the congregation then submits the selected name to the Home Office where it will be entered into the official records.

When a chartered church or chartered fellowship group is initially established, the congregation is also to submit to the denomination the EIN (employee identification number) or TIN (taxpayer identification number) of the registered bank account they will be using in their financial system. When this information is received by the Home Office, the denomination will issue the congregation a charter and will notify the IRS accordingly.

3.6 Requirements specific to non-chartered fellowship groups

In addition to chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups, GCI has very small congregations (less than 15, on average, in regular attendance at worship services), which are referred to as "non-chartered fellowship groups." As the name implies, these groups are not chartered by the denomination and thus are exempt from certain requirements for chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups as explained below.

3.6.1 Membership

Because non-chartered fellowship groups do not keep official member records, those attending these groups hold membership in the *GCI National Church*, with records kept by the GCI Home Office.

3.6.2 Financial management

Because non-chartered fellowship groups do not have in place the standard financial management system required of chartered churches and chartered fellowship groups (and thus are not able to receive and receipt tax-deductible donations), those attending these groups send their donations directly to the GCI Home Office, which then receipts those donations as tax-deductible to the donors, then uses the funds to support GCI ministries in the U.S. and abroad.

To cover local expenses (which typically are quite small), non-chartered fellowship groups have a *local expense fund* into which are deposited small non-tax-deductible donations. Those funds are then used to pay for local needs such as beverages, snacks, photocopies, training, etc. The balance in a local expense fund *must never exceed $500* and the group's Contact Person is responsible to set up internal checks and balances to monitor fund activity. *Note that a GCI EIN is NOT to be used to identify this account.*

3.6.3 Primary leadership

The primary leader of a non-chartered fellowship group is referred to as a *Facilitator*. This person is automatically the group's *Contact Person* (see 3.7). Facilitators who are Elders may use the title *Pastor*.

3.6.4 Reporting and continuing education

Non-chartered fellowship groups are not required to submit to the denomination monthly church reports and quarterly/annual financial reports. These groups are asked to submit to their Regional Director a quarterly memo reporting their average attendance for the worship services held that quarter. Though Facilitators are not expected to participate in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program (Appendix E), they are encouraged to do so.

3.7 Contact Person

All congregations (chartered churches, chartered fellowship groups and non-chartered fellowship groups) are to provide a member in good standing to serve as the congregation's *Contact Person*—the primary point of connection between the congregation and the denomination. The Contact Person in chartered churches is always the Lead Pastor, one of the two Co-Pastors, or one of the members of the

Pastoral Team. In chartered and non-chartered fellowship groups, the Contact Person is always the group Facilitator. Appointment of the Contact Person is made by the Regional Director who will consult with the Pastors or members of the Pastoral Team and/or other key leaders in the congregation in making the selection.

The Contact Person must meet the qualifications of a Ministry Leader (see 3.9) and be accountable to the denomination in seeing that the congregation operates in accordance with the requirements set out in this manual relevant to its congregational type. The Regional Director will assist the Contact Person in designing structures and systems to help the congregation meet these requirements in ways that best align with the congregation's circumstances and resources.

3.8 Elders

Through the ordinance of *ordination*, GCI confers on appropriately qualified men and women the biblical title of *Elder*. At the time of ordination, and subsequently as their role changes, Elders are titled by the denomination to serve as *Pastors* of various types.

3.8.1 Ordination of Elders

Within GCI-USA, Elders are officially appointed through *ordination*—a process that involves the denomination's review and approval through the Home Office staff. The denomination has this oversight because Elders constitute GCI's official "Clergy" (a status with ecclesiastical, legal and cultural ramifications).

The ordination process typically is initiated by the congregation's primary pastoral leader, who recommends an individual for ordination to the ecclesiastical office of Elder. In order to confirm that God is calling that man or woman to serve in that way, the pastoral leader usually discusses the matter with the candidate to determine ability and willingness to serve; then the pastoral leader discusses the matter with the congregation's Advisory Council and other leaders. If this preliminary screening indicates that ordination should proceed, the pastoral leader invites the candidate to complete an *Ordination and Appointment Application and Questionnaire* (downloadable from online.gci.org (under "Resources"). Completion of this application will include a criminal background check initiated and reviewed by the Home Office.

The completed application is reviewed and approved first by the candidate's primary pastoral leader, then by the Regional Director, and last by the Home Office. If all levels approve, the pastoral leader (if an Elder) will be authorized by the Home Office to ordain the candidate on behalf of the denomination. The pastoral leader may ask other Elders to participate in the ordination ceremony (found in the GCI *Ceremonies* book). Typically, the ceremony will be performed in the presence of the assembled congregation.

An Elder's ordination continues to be valid within GCI unless revoked due to disciplinary action of the denomination, or if surrendered by the Elder, or if the Elder is reclassified due to inactivity (thus automatically becoming an *Elder Emeritus*—see below*)*.

An Elder's ordination status is transferable between GCI congregations so long as the Elder remains a GCI member in good standing (note, however, that the pastoral role of the Elder in the new congregation is determined by the pastoral leader of that congregation, in consultation with the Regional Director).

3.8.2 Titling of Elders

Concurrent with ordination, and in accordance with what is approved by the denomination via the Elder ordination application process, the Elder is granted a title descriptive of his/her pastoral leadership role within the congregation. These titles include Lead Pastor, Co-Pastor, Associate Pastor and Assistant Pastor (see 3.10 and 3.13). The title may be changed from time to time as the Elder's pastoral function changes. Changes in function and title are to be preapproved by the Regional Director and communicated to the Home Office.

If an Elder becomes unable to actively fill a pastoral leadership role within the congregation, their pastoral title automatically becomes *Elder Emeritus*. An Elder Emeritus retains his/her Elder ordination credentials and the title "Elder Emeritus" so long as they continue to remain a GCI member in good standing (see 2.5), which includes adherence to GCI's Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C).

3.8.3 Elder qualifications and responsibilities

Individuals approved for ordination and for continuing service as Elders are to adhere to the following qualifications and responsibilities (additional stipulations related to specific pastoral leadership responsibilities are noted elsewhere):

3.8.3.1 Adherence to the general standards for Elders set forth by the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

3.8.3.2 Adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders in Grace Communion International (Appendix C).

3.8.3.3 Recognized leadership ability, including spiritual giftedness and skill in the area(s) of assigned pastoral ministry. Candidates for ordination as an Elder will usually have served first as a Ministry Leader.

3.8.3.4 GCI membership in good standing, including attendance in a GCI congregation on a regular basis, and consistency and generosity (proportionate to income) in giving to that congregation.

3.8.3.5 Willingness and availability to serve in the responsibilities of an Elder as assigned by the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor.

3.8.3.6 Participation in GCI's Pastoral Continuing Education Program (Appendix E) is expected of Elders appointed to serve as Lead Pastors or Co-Pastors. Other Elders are encouraged but are not required to participate.

3.8.3.7 Individuals who have been convicted of a crime involving any type of abuse of a minor or the sexual abuse of an adult are excluded from being ordained or continuing to serve as an Elder.

3.8.3.8 In conducting ministerial responsibilities, Elders are not to meet alone (out of public view) with an individual adult of the opposite sex nor with an individual minor of either sex when that individual is not a member of the Elder's immediate family.

3.8.4 General duties of Elders

Elder ordination confers delegated authority and responsibility to perform official Clergy functions on behalf of the denomination as defined by the appointees' supervisor(s) in accordance with the governance system set forth in this manual. The scope of these functions involves pastoral leadership, including oversight of the spiritual nurture, care and development of members and affiliates within the area assigned to the Elder. In these responsibilities, Elders typically serve as teachers, preachers, pastoral counselors and administrators of church discipline and accountability processes.

3.8.5 Conducting church ceremonies

As the denomination's designated Clergy, GCI Elders, within the parameters specified in this section, are authorized by the denomination to conduct and to supervise the denomination's church ceremonies, which constitute the official religious worship of the denomination. Those ceremonies are as follows (with most described further in the GCI *Church Ceremonies* book):

- **Worship services**
- **Funerals** (conducted on behalf of the church)
- **Baptisms** (conducted on behalf of the church)
- **Weddings and renewal of wedding vows** (note that there often are legal requirements for officiating weddings set by local law)
- **Ordaining Elders and installing Pastors in GCI congregations** (and note that all Elder ordinations and Pastor installations must be preapproved by the denomination through the standard application process)
- **Commissioning of Ministry Leaders**
- **Anointing the sick with oil** (in conjunction with prayer for healing)
- **The blessing of little children** (when this ceremony is part of an official worship service)
- **The Lord's Supper** (Communion)

Elders currently serving actively in a pastoral role are authorized by the denomination to conduct these official church ceremonies. However, if the Elder conducting the ceremony is not the Lead Pastor of the congregation involved, the Lead Pastor is to be informed in advance. Those who are Elder Emeritus (i.e. not actively serving in a pastoral role) may also conduct church ceremonies with advance permission from the applicable Lead Pastor.

Church members in good standing who are not Elders may conduct church ceremonies (unless prohibited by law, as is the case for officiating a marriage ceremony in some locales) so long as they are *pre-authorized* by and under the *direct supervision* of an active GCI Elder in that locale. If the ceremony involves members of an established

congregation, the Lead Pastor of that congregation is to be notified in advance.

3.8.6 Authority and accountability of Elders

Ordination as an Elder grants delegated ecclesiastical authority from the denomination to the Elder and is subject to the delegation and supervision of the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor(s). The Regional Director is the direct ecclesiastical supervisor for any Elder serving as the Contact Person in a congregation. The ecclesiastical supervisor for other Elders is their immediate supervisor (typically the Lead Pastor) within the congregation. In the case of Co-Pastors, the supervisor is the Co-Pastor serving as the Contact Person.

3.8.7 What Elders may expect from their ecclesiastical supervisors

Those who supervise Elders will provide support as well as just and fair treatment, striving to:

- Be accessible, promptly responding to requests from Elders.
- Provide sound and clear spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
- Openly and respectfully communicate any serious complaints brought against the Elder.
- Provide reasonable time for feedback to requests for information from Elders.
- Handle sensitive and confidential information about an Elder in a responsible manner.
- Be sensitive to the personal and family needs of Elders.
- Be open and responsive to questions from Elders.

3.8.8 Removal from the office of Elder

An Elder may be removed from office for disciplinary reasons (see chapter 5). Removal involves revocation of the status and title of Elder and the functional pastoral title that has been given. This action is usually initiated by the Elder's immediate supervisor and must be approved by the Regional Director (when applicable) and the Home Office.

Upon revocation of the status of Elder, the individual ceases to be authorized to perform the ecclesiastical responsibilities of an Elder and is to surrender their ordination certificate to their ecclesiastical supervisor. If an Elder believes they have been removed from office inappropriately, recourse is available through the official appeals process (chapter 5).

3.8.9 Resignation from the office of Elder

It is appropriate for an Elder to resign from office when they believe they are no longer able, in good conscience, to meet the requirements stipulated for Elders. Upon resignation, the individual ceases to hold the title of Elder and is no longer authorized to perform the ecclesiastical responsibilities of an Elder. Notice of resignation and the Elder's ordination certificate are to be sent to the Elder's ecclesiastical supervisor.

An Elder who is able to continue to meet the requirements for being an Elder but is no longer able to serve actively in a pastoral leadership role, may, at their request, or by the action of the Lead Pastor, be reclassified as "Elder Emeritus" (see 3.8.2).

3.9 Ministry Leaders

In GCI-USA, the title of Ministry Leader is conferred on men and women officially appointed through *commissioning* to serve as leaders of individual ministries within congregations. Such commissions are time-limited and renewable at the discretion of the congregation's Lead Pastor.

3.9.1 Responsibilities of Ministry Leaders

The responsibilities of a Ministry Leader are at the discretion of their supervisor in accordance with the standards for certain roles set forth in this manual. Ministry Leaders coordinate the work of others in conducting congregational ministries. Their diverse responsibilities are reflected in functional titles that are granted at the time of commissioning at the discretion of the Lead Pastor. Examples of such titles include Worship Ministry Leader, Youth Ministry Leader and Women's Ministry Leader. The title of Pastor is reserved for Elders serving in pastoral roles. A Ministry Leader should not be given the title of Pastor unless they are an Elder.

3.9.2 Qualifications of Ministry Leaders

General qualifications for service as a Ministry Leader are noted in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 (where the title "Deacon" is used). Specific qualifications and responsibilities include spiritual maturity; willingness to serve; GCI membership in good standing (including consistency in attendance, financial giving and serving); recognized leadership ability; spiritual giftedness; and skill (or willingness to learn) in the

area(s) of anticipated service. Those commissioned as Ministry Leaders normally will have served first as ministry workers within the congregation where their ability and desire to lead is tested and confirmed.

3.9.3 Selection and commissioning of Ministry Leaders

A proposal to commission a Ministry Leader is typically initiated by the Lead Pastor (or equivalent), though any member may recommend a person for commissioning by contacting the Lead Pastor. The details of the evaluation and confirmation process rest with the Lead Pastor, though Lead Pastors are encouraged to discuss the matter with the candidate, the Advisory Council and other leaders.

3.9.4 Authority and accountability of Ministry Leaders

Being commissioned confers the title of Ministry Leader and grants delegated authority from the Lead Pastor to the one commissioned. That authority is limited to the specific scope of the assignment as defined by the Ministry Leader's supervisor(s) within the general parameters set forth in this manual. The commission is valid only within the GCI congregation where it was granted—it is not transferable to other congregations.

It is recommended that commissions be granted for stipulated durations (three years is suggested but not mandated). At the end of the term, the Ministry Leader ceases to hold the title unless re-appointed. Such reappointments may be made informally or in a commissioning ceremony. Some congregations hold an annual ceremony for commissioning and re-commissioning Ministry Leaders.

The service of Ministry Leaders within the congregation where they are commissioned is subject to the oversight and supervision of the Lead Pastor (or designee). Ministry Leaders may be removed from office by the discretionary action of the Lead Pastor. In making decisions concerning such removals, the Lead Pastor would usually seek the input of other leaders and the Advisory Council.

3.10 Lead Pastors

Most GCI chartered churches are led by an Elder designated by the denomination to serve as the congregation's *Lead Pastor*. In such cases, the Lead Pastor automatically is designated as the congregation's Contact Person (see 3.7).

Lead Pastors either are employed by GCI (classified as *employed pastors,* with their employment being full or part-time) or are volunteers (classified as *bivocational pastors*). For requirements specific to employed pastors, see the GCI-USA *Employees Manual.*

3.10.1 Lead Pastor: general responsibilities

All Lead Pastors must meet the qualifications and responsibilities of Elders (including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders—see Appendix C).
A man or woman serving as a Lead Pastor is the primary spiritual and administrative leader in their congregation. They have various responsibilities (outlined below) including equipping, mobilizing and coaching teams of servant-leaders who work with the Lead Pastor's direction to lead the congregation in pursuit of its mission. The exact form of this leadership will vary depending on the congregation's specific organizational structure, size and needs, the gifting and "style" of the Lead Pastor, and various local and regional demands, customs, constraints and opportunities

3.10.2 Lead Pastor: accountabilities

Under GCI's system of governance, Lead Pastors are directly accountable to their Regional Director. In addition to this denominational accountability, they are to work closely with and seek the advice and counsel of other leaders in their congregation including other Elders, their Ministry Leaders and Advisory Council. They also are to stay in close touch with their *Finance Committee,* carefully overseeing the work of the congregation's Treasurer, in particular (see the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual* for details).

While these various leaders, councils and committees are directly accountable to the Lead Pastor, they also are responsible to the congregation and the denomination to act on direct knowledge or allegations of significant offense by the Lead Pastor. Such action is to be in accordance with the processes outlined in chapter 5.

3.10.3 What a Lead Pastor can expect from the denomination

Lead Pastors can expect their Regional Director and the Home Office to maintain open lines of communication with them, seeking their advice and input

and keeping them informed about decisions that affect their duties and congregation(s). They will also provide Lead Pastors with instruction, assistance, support and supervision as set forth in his manual.

3.10.4 Lead Pastor: specific responsibilities

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and Elders (including the Code of Ethics for Elders—see Appendix C), Lead Pastors are to see to it that the following pastoral responsibilities are being fulfilled within their congregation—either fulfilling them personally or through others who are appropriately gifted, equipper and supervised:

- Provide a caring pastoral presence in the members' lives, present at times of significant life transition including serious illness, serious conflict, funerals, weddings, etc.
- Provide sermons, Bible studies, discipleship classes and other forms of biblical instruction that is Christ-centered and gospel-focused, in harmony with the *GCI Statement of Beliefs* and GCI's Incarnational Trinitarian theology. Note that the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C) requires upholding denominational teachings. Sermons should be well-prepared, transformational, and typically expository (rather than topical). GCI recommends that sermons follow the Revised Common Lectionary.
- Lead the congregation in actively participating in Jesus' ministry, which multiplies believers, workers, leaders, ministries and churches.
- Provide inspiring Christ-centered and gospel-focused worship services that reflect input from the congregation and are sensitive to preferences/cultural norms within the community the congregation seeks to reach through the worship services.
- Administer church ceremonies: baptism, The Lord's Supper (Communion), weddings, funerals, anointing of the sick, blessing of children, etc.
- Counsel congregants on spiritual matters.
- Provide classes for prospective members, candidates for baptism and candidates for confirmation.
- Model/teach/facilitate spiritual formation (including spiritual disciplines that facilitate spiritual growth, including missional involvement).
- Represent the church at community functions.
- Visit members, affiliates and prospective members.
- Facilitate the participation of members in small groups where they are discipled, and non-members are reached. Toward that goal, see that small group leaders are identified, trained and supervised.
- Model and teach relational evangelism, seeking to make outreach a key part of the congregation's life.
- Model and teach generous stewardship of one's time, talent and treasure. Financial giving should be facilitated as an act of worship. It is GCI policy that all pastors, in accordance with the expectation of all elders, be consistent and generous (proportionate to income) in financial donations to the congregations where they serve.
- Identify, develop, mentor and empower leaders. Develop additional Elders and Ministry Leaders.
- Supervise other leaders in the congregation and see that periodic evaluations are given.
- Facilitate regular meetings of the congregation's Leadership Team, Advisory Council and Finance Committee. Practice team-based leadership. Lead Pastors should typically be present at all Advisory Council meetings.
- Administer GCI's disciplinary, grievance and appeals processes within the congregation (see chapter 5).
- Supervise the maintenance of member files using standard online systems. See to it that online member lists are kept up-to-date.
- Supervise the administration of the congregation's financial management system in compliance with the GCI-USA *Financial Management Manual*. Ensure that required financial reports are complete and filed on time.
- Report monthly to the Home Office using the standard online monthly church report form.
- The Lead Pastor (or equivalent) is to be consistently present at weekly worship services unless on vacation or due to a work conflict (such as when the Lead Pastor is not employed full-time by GCI, or when there is a church circuit and the Lead Pastor cannot be present in all of the circuit's congregations each week).
- Lead Pastors and Co-Pastors in chartered churches are expected to participate in the GCI

Pastoral Continuing Education Program outlined in Appendix E.

3.10.5 Lead Pastor transition process

When a transition from one Lead Pastor to another is anticipated, the congregation's existing Lead Pastor (or in the absence of a Lead Pastor, the congregation's emergency contact—see below), is to contact the Regional Director to discuss steps in a transition process. The Regional Director will guide the process, working closely with the existing Lead Pastor (or emergency contact) and a transition committee made up of representatives from the congregation's Leadership Team and Advisory Council.

To facilitate these transition processes, it is vital that each congregation have in place an internal ***emergency pastoral leadership transition plan*** that specifies which of the congregation's leaders will fill in temporarily for the Lead Pastor in the case of death, resignation or disability. The transition plan should designate one leader in the congregation to serve as the congregation's ***emergency contact*** who will serve during the transition process as the congregation's Contact Person (see 3.7).

Though GCI-USA does not have a mandatory retirement age for its Lead Pastors, it is vital to consider this issue early-on so that eventual succession is prepared for by both the congregation and the denomination. Therefore, upon turning 62, all Lead Pastors are to consult with their Regional Director to discuss plans related to leadership succession. Out of this discussion will come a succession plan that will include relevant goals and target dates for identifying, equipping and, eventually, installing a new Lead Pastor (or equivalent). That plan will be the joint work of the Lead Pastor and their Regional Director with appointment of a new Lead Pastor made by the denomination at an appropriate future time in accordance with the processes set forth in this manual.

3.10.6 Lead Pastor time off/incapacitation

When taking vacation, Lead Pastors employed by GCI are not to miss more than two consecutive weekly worship services. Longer absences are to be pre-authorized by the Regional Director. When a Lead Pastor (employed by GCI) knows in advance that they will be absent from their pastoral duties they should request the time off via the ADP portal. Unpaid Lead Pastors should send an email to their Regional Director requesting time of in advance include the anticipated beginning and ending dates of the absence and a phone number where they may be reached.

Should a Lead Pastor become incapacitated or otherwise unable to fulfill any of the duties specified in this manual, the Regional Director and Home Office are to be notified immediately.

3.11 Pastoral Teams

Some small chartered churches, rather than having a Lead Pastor or Co-Pastors choose to operate with a *Pastoral Team* where members of the team (who may or may not be Elders, but who typically are experienced Ministry Leaders) fulfill together the various responsibilities of a Lead Pastor (see 3.10.4). The Regional Director assists in the selection of Pastoral Team members (typically three to five members), in the organizing of the members in fulfilling team responsibilities, and in designating one member of the team (who is an ordained Elder) to serve as the team *Facilitator* and *Contact Person* (see 3.7). Prior to appointment to the Pastoral Team, all prospective team members are to submit the standard application and questionnaire, which includes passing a criminal background check.

3.12 Associate and Assistant Pastors

In order to provide spiritual oversight within the congregation, to advance team-based leadership, and to provide for smooth leadership succession, it is GCI's goal that its chartered churches have multiple pastors (such as a Lead Pastor working with multiple Assistant Pastors).

Appointments to the offices of Associate and Assistant Pastor are typically made by the Lead Pastor at the time the person is ordained an Elder (using the standard ordination application process, see 3.8). Changes to those appointments may be made by the Lead Pastor with advance approval of the Regional Director. At local discretion, Associate and Assistant Pastors may be given more descriptive pastoral titles such as Administrative Pastor, Executive Pastor, Youth Pastor, Children's Pastor, Teaching Pastor, Worship Pastor, Care Pastor, etc.

As a condition of appointment, Associate and Assistant Pastors are to meet the responsibilities of members as well as the qualifications and responsibilities of Elders, including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C). Additional responsibilities are noted below.

3.12.1 Associate Pastors

Associate Pastors may be employed by the denomination or may be bivocational (volunteer). They are directly supervised by their Lead Pastor and normally assist in the full range of the Lead Pastor's responsibilities, typically serving in a larger congregation or within a church circuit. The Lead Pastor defines the exact scope of an Associate Pastor's responsibilities in accordance with the guidelines in this manual.

3.12.2 Assistant Pastors

Assistant Pastors typically are bivocational (volunteer). They are directly supervised by their Lead Pastor or an Associate Pastor. Assistant Pastors normally oversee a specific pastoral ministry within the congregation and often are given related functional titles such as "Youth Pastor," "Seniors Pastor," etc. The Lead Pastor defines the exact scope of an Assistant Pastor's responsibilities in accordance with this manual.

3.13 Advisory Councils

To facilitate team-based leadership and mutual accountability, all chartered churches (except those led by Pastoral Teams) are to have an Advisory Council. The congregation's Lead Pastor is responsible to see that the Advisory Council is appointed and then operates as set forth here. Due to their small size, chartered fellowship groups and non-chartered fellowship groups need not have an Advisory Council.

3.13.1 The role of the Advisory Council

The role of the Advisory Council is to offer focused, on-going advice, perspective and counsel to the Lead Pastor and other Pastors (Elders) serving the congregation. The Advisory Council is supervised by and directly accountable to the Lead Pastor (or equivalent).

The Advisory Council is NOT constituted to direct the day-to-day management of the congregation. That work is the responsibility of the congregation's "staff" (the Pastors and Ministry Leaders). Furthermore, the Advisory Council is not constituted as a board of directors to govern the congregation. Primary oversight of the administrative leadership of the congregation is the responsibility of the Lead Pastor who is directly accountable to the Regional Director and the Home Office.

The Lead Pastor works in a team-based (collegial, consensus-based) way to share governance responsibilities with others, including other Elders, Ministry Leaders, and the Finance Committee, with the advice, counsel and perspective given by the Advisory Council.

The general scope of the advice and counsel offered by the Advisory Council concerns significant policy and administrative matters related to the following three general spiritual oversight concerns:

- The needs and interests of the congregation, including its overall vision, mission and strategy, and the particular needs and interests of its members, affiliates and guests.
- The needs and interests of the community (or communities) where the congregation ministers (including potential members as well as the larger body of Christ).
- The needs and interests of the denomination (including GCI values, mission, vision, doctrine/theology, policies and practices).

Within these three areas of concern, any of the congregation's Pastors may bring to the Advisory Council specific issues for review and consideration. The Lead Pastor together with any other Pastors need to carefully (and prayerfully) consider the Advisory Council's consensus advice, counsel and perspective on these matters, which are to regularly include, as a minimum, the following specifics:

- The development of the congregation's vision document (values, mission, vision and goals).
- The congregation's annual budget (prepared by the Lead Pastor working with the Ministry Leaders and the Finance Committee) and any revisions to that budget.
- Advance review of any expenditures not provided for in the annual budget.
- Review of quarterly and annual financial reports prepared by the Finance Committee in accordance with the requirements of the *Financial Management Manual*.
- The congregation's annual activity calendar including significant changes to that calendar.
- Significant administrative matters such as the congregation's meeting place, day and time, significant worship service format changes, etc.
- The basic organization of the congregation's primary ministries (and any substantial changes to that structure).

- Consideration of candidates for ordination as Elders and commissioning as Ministry Leaders.

3.13.2 Advisory Council meetings

As a minimum, the Advisory Council is to meet once each quarter. More frequent meetings are the norm when a congregation is undergoing significant change and/or conflict. The Lead Pastor or another Pastor may chair Advisory Council meetings, or a chair may be appointed from the Advisory Council's membership as approved by the Lead Pastor. The same chair may serve each meeting, or the chair may be rotated.

Normally, the Lead Pastor is to be present at all Advisory Council meetings (though the council may meet without the Lead Pastor present when he/she gives advance consent) so that they remain actively involved with the council in order to support, validate, receive and carefully consider the council's advice, counsel and perspective. The Lead Pastor is also responsible to see that the council is provided with needed information, training and coaching so that it is equipped for its work.

3.13.3 Resolving disagreements

In the case of significant, unresolved disagreements between the Lead Pastor and the Advisory Council, either party may initiate the grievance process outlined in chapter 5.

3.13.4 Qualifications for Advisory Council members

Advisory Council members are to be selected based on ability and availability to serve. They are to be members in good standing, noted for wisdom and insight and ability to work with people. They are to be regular in attendance and generous in giving (in accordance with financial ability). Any such member of the congregation, age 16 or older, male or female, is eligible to serve on the council. Elders who are actively serving in a pastoral role in the congregation are not eligible to serve on the council since the council exists to advise the Pastors.

Some congregations automatically appoint certain congregational leaders to the Advisory Council including the Treasurer (when the Treasurer is not an Elder), Elders Emeritus (i.e. Elders not serving as Pastors), and/or Ministry Leaders. Such appointment strategies are at the discretion of the Lead Pastor. Note that it is helpful (even vital) that the council include non-leaders so that the perspective of non-leaders is well represented.

Whatever strategy is used in forming the Advisory Council, care should be taken to not duplicate roles and not overload people's schedules. Moreover, care should be taken to maintain diversity on the council to reflect (where possible) the diversity of the congregation in spiritual giftedness, gender, race, ethnicity, age, location of residence and socio-economic background.

3.13.5 Appointment of Advisory Council members

Members of the council may be nominated by the membership as a whole with final selection by the Lead Pastor or the Lead Pastor may make the nominations with final selection by a vote of the members (including youth members). Either way, the members are actively involved in the selection process, and the Lead Pastor is able to assist in screening out candidates not meeting the qualifications noted in this section.

Following is a suggested process for selecting Advisory Council members (the Lead Pastor may vary the process to fit local needs so long as a participatory process is utilized).

- Distribute nomination ballots to members.
- Appoint a secretary to handle all tabulations. Tabulate the ballots and place the top ten names on a second ballot, listed in random order.
- At the next worship service, distribute the second ballot. Each member will then choose three persons from the list of ten.
- Tabulate the second ballot and give the Lead Pastor a list of the top seven names in order of preference. From these names, the Lead Pastor will select several members to serve. A council of five is suggested (there may be as few as three in small congregations and more in larger). The Lead Pastor determines the number.
- Announce and post the names of those appointed at the next worship service.
- The Advisory Council and the Pastors will arrange to begin meeting at regular times.

3.13.6 Term of office for Advisory Council members

There is no set length of service for Advisory Council members. The Lead Pastor, in consultation with

the other Pastors and the Advisory Council, will determine how often new members are to be appointed. It is recommended that term limits be set in advance and be staggered so that only part of the council is replaced at any one time (a maximum term of three years is suggested).

An Advisory Council member may resign from office prior to completion of their term. A member may be removed from office by the discretionary action of the Lead Pastor. In either case, the process for choosing a replacement may follow the procedure above, or the replacement may be selected by the Lead Pastor from the final pool of nominees identified in a recent balloting process.

3.14 Finance Committees

Each chartered church and chartered fellowship group is to have a Finance Committee that implements and administers the denomination's standard financial management system for congregations set forth in the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*. The work of the Finance Committee is to be overseen closely by the Lead Pastor (or equivalent). Membership on the Finance Committee is by appointment of the Lead Pastor with the advice of the other Pastors and (as applicable) the Advisory Council. The congregation's Treasurer and Lead Counter are automatically members of the Finance Committee, which is also to include at least one general member. For more information about Finance Committees, refer to the *Financial Management Manual*.

3.15 Children and teen ministry leaders and workers

Because Children and Teen Ministry Leaders and workers serve minors, their area of ministry has special accountability requirements. All adults who work in ministries directed toward those under age 18 must undergo a criminal background check (sometimes involving fingerprinting) and be otherwise pre-qualified and screened using the *Children and Teen Ministry Volunteer Application* (at online.GCI.org under "Resources").

All teens working in ministries directed to minors must also be pre-qualified and screened (though a criminal background check is not required) using the *Children's Ministry Teen Volunteer Application* (available at online.GCI.org).

This application and criminal background check process need only be conducted once, but each year returning leaders and workers must be screened by verifying that their names do not appear on a state sex offender registry. A directory of such registries is available on the FBI website at: http://www.nsopr.gov/.

All persons who desire to work with the children participating in our programs and activities must be screened as noted above. In addition, no person should be considered for any volunteer position involving contact with minors until he/she has been attending with Grace Communion International for a minimum of six (6) months. This time of interaction between a new member and congregational leaders allows for better evaluation and suitability of the applicant for working with children.

Applicants (of any age) with prior criminal convictions of abuse (physical or sexual) involving minors or of crimes of a sexual nature involving adults are permanently excluded from service as Children or Teen Ministry Leaders and workers.

In conducting ministry to children and teens, an individual Ministry Leader or worker is never to be alone (out of public view) with an individual minor (of either gender) who is not a family member. To avoid this situation, it is necessary for the ministry activity to be conducted within public view or that two or more responsible adults are present.

3.16 Restructuring and disbanding congregations

There are times when, due to insufficient human and/or financial resources, congregations find it impractical or even impossible to continue operating as they have been. In such circumstances, the Regional Director will work with the congregation's Contact Person and other leaders to explore options and take steps, typically involving restructuring or disbanding.

3.16.1 Restructuring. As noted in section 3.3, GCI-USA has three types of congregations. In some cases, it will be helpful for a congregation to change to a different congregational type—moving, for example, from chartered church to chartered or non-chartered fellowship group.

3.16.2 Disbanding. When restructuring is not a viable option, the Regional Director will help the congregation disband. This step is taken with utmost care, recognizing that once a congregation disbands, bringing it back likely will not be possible. Given the sensitivity of disbanding, the Regional Director will involve the congregation's members in evaluating this option. Here are the typical steps:

- The Contact Person of the congregation confers with the Regional Director before discussing disbanding with the membership.
- If consideration of disbanding proceeds, the Regional Director will ask the Contact Person to discuss various options with the Advisory Council and other leaders. Results of these meetings are to be shared with the Regional Director before proceeding.
- If warranted, the Regional Director will direct the Contact Person to meet with the congregation's members to discuss the matter, including presenting options authorized by the Regional Director. In that meeting, members will be given opportunity to express their concerns and preferences and to suggest other options. If possible, the Contact Person will give all members three weeks advance notice of this meeting. The results of these contacts are to be reported to the Regional Director before a final decision regarding disbanding is made by the denomination in partnership with the congregation. Discussion concerning disbanding will include possible transfer of members to other GCI congregations or to the GCI National Church. The Contact Person of the sending congregation will assist in such transfers.
- If a congregation disbands, any property (contents of bank accounts and other financial instruments included) owned by the congregation and/or the denomination are to be transferred immediately to the denomination as instructed by the Regional Director. The denomination shall choose one or more of its other chartered congregations or ministries to receive this property. All financial records (including computer files) are to be transmitted immediately to the denomination's Treasurer where they will be placed with denominational records and retained according to the records retention and destruction policy.

It is recommended that a congregation that is disbanding hold a special final worship service that provides a meaningful and appropriate opportunity both to grieve the loss of the congregation and to celebrate its history. The Regional Director may be consulted for advice on how to conduct this service.

CHAPTER 4
DENOMINATIONAL LEADERSHIP

As an international Christian denomination, Grace Communion International is diverse, yet united in pursuing the mission, vision and objectives outlined in this chapter.

GCI MISSION:

Living and sharing the gospel

We seek to fulfill the Great Commission by living and sharing the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ.

GCI VISION:

Healthy Church

We seek to be a fellowship of *Christ-centered, missional churches that* faithfully and creatively engage in what Jesus is doing in the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Father's mission to the world.

GCI OBJECTIVES:

At the denominational level, GCI advances this mission and vision by pursuing five objectives:

1) Multiplying healthy, Christ-centered, missional congregations where God is worshipped, and people are nurtured and helped to mature as followers of Jesus Christ.
2) Providing sound biblical teaching through congregations, media and personal outreach in relevant, meaningful forms for people of diverse backgrounds and ages.
3) Expressing the love of God to all through the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
4) Equipping people for Christian service so that the gospel can be known, understood, and experienced.
5) Sharing in the work of the gospel with the broader Christian community, acknowledging that we can learn from one another and that Christ's love goes beyond denominational boundaries.

4.1 GCI denominational leadership

In pursuit of the aforementioned mission, vision and objectives, and in accordance with its governance system, GCI operates using the Elder-led denominational leadership structure outlined in the rest of this chapter.

The GCI Board is the denomination's highest governing authority. It is charged with overseeing the international and domestic (U.S.) organization of the church. Board members serve four-year (staggered) terms. They must remain GCI Elders in good standing throughout their time in office.

Led by the Board Chair, with assistance from the Board Vice Chair, GCI's Board makes essential ecclesiastical and fiduciary (fiscal) decisions on behalf of the denomination.

The Board selects and appoints the Board Chair and the Board members and approves the Board Chair's appointment of the Board Vice Chair. The Board also establishes the denomination's doctrinal direction by appointing (as needed) a Doctrinal Committee that is led by the Board Chair.

The Board selects, appoints and supervises the denomination's President and approves the President's appointment of the denomination's Vice President and Treasurer.

The GCI President appoints and oversees a team of administrative leaders and support staff that aspires to operate with integrity, honesty and faithfulness to the Word of God, with a focus on providing GCI congregations around the world with the following key services:

- Help in participating with Jesus Christ in fulfilling the mission of God to the world.
- A clear and compelling denominational identity.
- Doctrinal and theological integrity.
- Effective biblical instructional materials, church news and information.
- Maintenance of GCI's official history.

- Preparation, training, selection, continuing education and supervision of competent, Christ-centered, Spirit-led Pastors.
- Skilled administrative, accounting, human resources, insurance and legal services in support of congregations.
- Church administration and church development functions to ordain Elders and recruit, train and supervise those who are serving as Lead Pastors, Church Planters and Church Facilitators; and to support other Pastors and Ministry Leaders; advance youth and children's ministry; and advance church planting (see 4:2).
- A Treasurer's office that superintends a system within congregations and the denomination to account for and receipt donations in compliance with all federal and state regulations regarding donations, church expenses and disbursements of funds. This system also provides accounting services for all pastoral salaries and benefits and accounting and legal services for denominational offices.
- Administrative support for denominationally sponsored conferences.
- The GCI.org denominational website and related websites.
- Maintenance of the denomination's Home Office and other church-owned facilities and operations.
- Maintenance of membership in appropriate Christian organizations and partnership with other denominations in denomination-level mission-directed initiatives.

4.2 Church administration and church development teams

In support of its congregations and ministers, the GCI Home Office provides church administration and church development services through two teams.

4.2.1 Church administration team

- **Church operations coordinator.** This individual reports to the GCI President and coordinates all operations related to GCI's congregations and provides services related to scheduling, meeting planning, budgeting, accounting, printing, resource distribution and record-keeping. This person can be reached at 980-495-3976 and by email at home.office@gci.org.

- **Superintendents**. These individuals oversee GCI operations within a global area, which typically includes one or more nations. The Superintendents report to the GCI President.

- **Regional Directors.** These individuals provide support, resourcing and supervision to congregations within their region. Regional Directors report to their Superintendent.

4.2.2 Church development team (in the U.S.)

This team consists of four component ministries, each led by a National Coordinator or a point person who manages the service. The Development Team members report to the GCI President in the U.S. (or to a Superintendent in other areas).

Church Multiplication Ministries (CMM). This ministry provides equipping and support for birthing new churches and for re-launching established ones. The Regional Directors are the point of contact. An annual summit meeting is held (by invitation only).

- **Generations Ministries (GenMin).** This ministry has a part-time National Coordinator and provides support tools for US congregations serving children, teens and young adults. It oversees programs that develop young emerging leaders and supports the congregation-based "Neighborhood Camps."(https://resources.gci.org/genmin)

- **Ministry coaching.** This ministry supports Pastors and Church Planters by training, certifying and deploying Ministry Coaches. (https://resources.gci.org/coaching)

- **GCI Intern and Pastoral Resident Program.** This ministry interns young adults in accord with GCI's leader development vision for training Pastors, Church Planters and other ministers of the gospel. (https://resources.gci.org/intern-program)

CHAPTER 5
GRIEVANCE, DISCIPLINE AND APPEALS PROCESSES

This chapter sets forth values and procedures related to dealing with grievances, extending church discipline to offenders, and hearing appeals regarding disciplinary actions. This section does not limit in any way the "at will" status of all GCI employees as outlined in this manual in the section titled "***Preface: Governance Stipulations"***

5.1 Core values

By their very nature, grievance, discipline and appeals processes involve conflict. Because of the challenges that conflict brings, and to promote the health and unity of the church and its members, it is vital that the administration of the processes outlined in this chapter be grounded in the following biblically-based core values:

Love
Love for God and for people motivates the church to invite Jesus to correct his body, the church (Rev. 3:19). The church must act out of the base of Jesus' love, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as it administers grievance, discipline and appeals processes. Love causes the church to seek to protect the weak and innocent even as it seeks, in a spirit of love, to hear grievances against the accused and then extend appropriate discipline to those who are shown to be offenders.

Grace
The administration of such processes must also be motivated by God's grace—his positive regard, lavish care and generous provision for those who, by faith, place their trust in Christ (Eph. 2:8-10). Through God's Spirit of grace, all people, including offenders, are treated with dignity and respect despite their lack of personal merit.

Healing
Such processes must be administered in ways that advance restoration and healing (Gal. 6:1) rather than to punish and exact revenge (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). When discipline is administered with the intent of restoration and healing, harm (2 Cor. 7:8-13; 1 Cor. 5.5), death (James 5:19-20) and condemnation (1 Cor. 11:32) are avoided for those disciplined, even while others are protected from an offender's sinful acts.

Holiness
Because the church is called to participate in the holy, triune relating of the Father, Son and Spirit (Heb. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:7), the administration of such processes must seek to enhance and promote the personal morality and ethical conduct of believers who are being sanctified through the indwelling Word (Eph. 5:25-27). If the church abdicates its responsibility to discipline, its testimony in the world will be hindered, particularly with regard to its influence for good.

Unity
The administration of such processes must be for the advancement of unity in the church. Unity is enhanced when major divisions in belief, practice and attitude are reconciled (Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; Titus 3:10; Phil. 4:2).

Confidentiality
In administering such processes, it is important for the privacy, dignity and protection of the parties involved that appropriate confidentiality be maintained (1 Pet. 4:8; Prov. 17:9). Though, at times, circumstances are such that absolute confidentiality is not possible (and thus cannot be guaranteed), the processes outlined in this chapter provide for the maintenance of confidentiality in ways that are biblically appropriate without promoting an inappropriate atmosphere of secrecy.

5.2 Addressing offenses: general process

In Christian community, offenses inevitably arise. Whatever the precise nature of such offenses, it is essential that they be addressed in accordance with the biblically appropriate procedures set forth in this chapter. Through these procedures, grounded in the aforementioned values, conflict is minimized, the concerns of the offended are given a fair hearing, the innocent are protected, and appropriate action is

taken to hold offenders accountable and to seek their restoration. Because Christ's love in a believer's heart "covers a multitude of sins" (1 Pet. 4:8), most offenses are quickly forgiven and forgotten with no need for a formalized grievance procedure. However, there are times when *significant* grievances arise that divide members, risk the well-being of the innocent, and/or threaten the effectiveness of the church in its mission. In such instances, it may be appropriate, or even mandatory, for members and/or church leaders to initiate the formal grievance process outlined in this section. Note, however, that this process must not be used for *insignificant* (trivial) offenses or to pursue a spirit of unforgiveness, revenge or intolerance. Rather, it is given to provide a measured, orderly way to seek *mediation* in pursuit of *reconciliation* concerning *significant grievances* that arise from significant offenses.

This mediation-reconciliation process is informed by the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew 18 and in other scriptures that address grievances and administering discipline within the body of Christ. Note that the process as outlined applies most directly to peers of generally equal standing and/or authority within the church. *In situations involving those of unequal standing and/or authority (such as between members and Pastors, children and adults, etc.), the process is adjusted accordingly.* Note also that a congregation itself (usually through the Lead Pastor) may initiate the process when circumstances warrant.

As individuals participate in the mediation-reconciliation process, it is essential that all submit prayerfully to the leadership of our High Priest and Lord, Jesus Christ. All participants are urged to approach the process with Jesus' love, compassion and grace and with a willingness to be mutually accountable—seeking together to find reconciliation that strengthens the lives of all concerned.

5.3 Handling grievances: formal mediation-reconciliation process

The need to initiate the following formal mediation-reconciliation process begins with a significant grievance arising from an alleged significant offense. "Significant" is, of course, a subjective term—what one views as "insignificant" may be quite "significant" to another. This process (with the following five sequential steps), is reserved for addressing *significant* grievances that arise from allegations of *significant* offenses, not insignificant, minor ones.

5.3.1 Step 1: private counsel (Matthew 18:15)

In approaching this step in the mediation-reconciliation process, Scripture places the burden for seeking reconciliation on all parties related to a grievance. For example, offenders are urged to contact those they believe they have offended to seek forgiveness and reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24). At times, however, offenders may be unaware of the offense, or, may simply be unwilling to initiate contact with the offended party. In such situations, it may be appropriate (or even mandatory) for the offended party to contact the (alleged) offender for private counsel.

The offended party will usually initiate the formal grievance process through one-on-one contact with the alleged offender (assuming it is safe and otherwise appropriate to make contact in this way—meeting in a public place is recommended). Such contact is for the purpose of gentle, yet direct confrontation in humility (Matt. 18:4) while maintaining confidentiality. The purpose for this contact is to seek reconciliation that involves appropriate accountability and forgiveness. If the alleged offender refuses to meet or if the outcome of this meeting is not satisfactory to the aggrieved party, step two may be pursued.

5.3.2 Step 2: mediation (Matt. 18:16)

The next step is for the aggrieved party to arrange for another confidential meeting with the alleged offender—this time taking along one or two others to assist. The reason for these additional persons is not to "gang up" on the accused but to offer a broader perspective, wise counsel and appropriate witnesses. The purpose of this second meeting is to gain agreement on the nature of the offense and to agree upon a course of action to advance appropriate accountability, forgiveness and reconciliation. If the alleged offender is unresponsive, step three may be initiated.

5.3.3 Step 3: arbitration and disciplinary action (Matt. 18:17a)

In this step, the aggrieved party officially notifies the church of the offense by contacting the alleged offender's ecclesiastical supervisor (their Lead Pastor or equivalent, or, when the alleged offender is the Lead Pastor, their Regional Director). That supervisor will then discuss the matter with the alleged

offender and others (as appropriate) to help find an appropriate resolution.

If needed, and otherwise appropriate, the supervisor will render a judgment on behalf of the church. This judgment may include a determination concerning disciplinary action in accordance with the policies set forth in this chapter. If the alleged offender, now determined to be an offender by the church, is unresponsive, step four may be initiated at the discretion of the supervisor (note that step four may be part of the disciplinary action called for in step three).

5.3.4 Step 4: publication (Matt. 18:17b)

In this step, and in accordance with appropriate confidentiality concerns for the aggrieved party and the offender, members of the church may be notified of the general nature of the offense and of the disciplinary action to be administered to the offender. Before any such publication, the ecclesiastical supervisor is to consult with their supervisor and with the denomination's legal department. The breadth of any publication will be limited to the circle of knowledge and influence of the offender within the church.

If the offender refuses to submit to the mandated discipline, the offender's membership may be suspended or terminated (including the suspension or termination of any leadership offices as applicable). If the offender successfully completes the discipline (including a mandated plan for restoration), step five will be initiated.

5.3.5 Step 5: restoration (Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 5)

When the offender has fulfilled any mandates for restitution and/or rehabilitation, the offender will be restored. If the offender's discipline was previously announced (in step 4), the restoration will be announced to as wide an audience as the announcement of the offense. Full involvement of the offender in certain duties within the church may be withheld temporarily or permanently depending on the nature of the offense. Restoration does not always imply a return to teaching or other public ministry responsibilities, including leadership.

5.4 Specific processes for arbitration and disciplinary action

In the course of pursuing the general grievance process within a GCI congregation, the church may become involved at various points. In some cases, the church (usually through the Lead Pastor) files the initial grievance. In other cases, the church first becomes involved at step three by providing arbitration and, if necessary, administering church discipline. The church's participation in the grievance process follows one of two procedural systems: one for members/affiliates (including leaders who are not Lead Pastors) and one for Lead Pastors. The reason for two systems is that Lead Pastors are supervised by and accountable to their Regional Director and the Home Office, while other members (including those serving as leaders within congregations) and affiliates are accountable to their Lead Pastor (or equivalent). Note also that there are special stipulations in the process when the member who is an alleged offender is an Elder.

5.4.1 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offender is a member or affiliate

When the alleged offender is a member or an affiliate (including leaders, with the exception of Lead Pastors) and the grievance process reaches the point when the church becomes involved, the official representing the church as arbiter will be the Lead Pastor (or equivalent) or an appropriately qualified individual designated by the Lead Pastor. The arbiter will seek to understand the facts in the situation and then determine if an appropriate process, in accordance with the guidelines of Matt. 18, has been followed up to that point. If appropriate, the arbiter may instruct the parties to return to an earlier step in the process.

Following a finding of facts, the arbiter will seek to help the parties find a resolution of the grievance that is satisfactory to all, with the reconciliation of relationship between the parties being the desired goal. Particular concern will be shown for the protection of the innocent and weak. If circumstances warrant, the arbiter will call for disciplinary action. Such action must be approved by the Lead Pastor and may involve one or more of the following measures involving the offender:

1. Further counseling
2. Suspension from membership or affiliation
3. Disassociation from membership or affiliation
4. Probation or revocation of official church titles (when the title being suspended or revoked is that of Elder, the suspension or revocation must be approved by the Superintendent).

As a disciplinary action, disassociation from membership or affiliation is used only in limited and significant situations. One such situation is a compelling need to protect the church from harm (including spiritual harm caused by divisive behavior). Another such situation is the need to emphasize to the offending member or affiliate the importance of taking immediate, significant remedial action. Disassociation goes into effect when the Lead Pastor confirms it, with or without notification and prior to the action being recorded in the member records. The Lead Pastor will, however, make a reasonable effort to personally notify the person being disassociated (in person, by telephone or in writing). This notification is to include informing the offender of the opportunity to appeal the disciplinary action as set forth in the appeals process outlined in this chapter.

Member disassociations are recorded by the congregation where the action was initiated. Such recording is done by emailing notification of the action to the Home Office at home.office@gci.org. The Home Office reviews all member disassociations.

5.4.2 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offender is a Lead Pastor

When the alleged offender is a Lead Pastor (or equivalent), the need for arbitration involving the church usually arises earlier in the grievance process than when the parties are peers of generally equal standing/authority. Some adults and most minors are understandably uncomfortable taking complaints concerning the actions of their Pastor to that Pastor. In such situations, the member or affiliate may contact another leader in the congregation or their Regional Director to provide arbitration, even before reaching step three in the process.

Though they are supervised by and accountable to the Lead Pastor, other leaders in a congregation (such as Elders, Advisory Council members and Ministry Leaders) are also accountable to the congregation and to the denomination to take appropriate action when there is clear evidence of behavior by the Lead Pastor that constitutes a significant offense (a breach of a Lead Pastor's duties and/or ethical behavior as defined in this manual). When such offenses are observed, or credible reports of such offenses are received, the other leaders are to follow the grievance procedures outlined in this chapter.

When the Regional Director learns of a grievance that alleges an offense by a Lead Pastor (or equivalent), the Regional Director will seek first to objectively establish the facts concerning the matter. The Regional Director may ask the involved parties to submit their account of the circumstances in writing. He may also ask them to provide (or he himself may seek out) the testimony of additional parties in accordance with 1 Tim. 5:19-21.

If, during this fact-finding stage it is determined that the person lodging the complaint has not communicated directly with the Pastor, they may be asked to do so subject to the concerns about un-equal standing/authority discussed earlier. The goal will be to encourage resolution as early as possible in the process while respecting the sensitivities of the relationship between Lead Pastors and their congregants and the need to protect the weak.

If it is inappropriate to try to do so, or if the parties are unable to meet and resolve the issue between them, the Regional Director will call for a meeting of the concerned parties (typically by telephone or video conference). In some instances, the Regional Director may have another church official take their place in this meeting. During the meeting, the Regional Director will seek to help the parties understand one another's viewpoints in order to, if possible, reach agreement concerning resolution of the grievance.

When deemed necessary by the Regional Director (a decision always reviewed with the Superintendent), the Lead Pastor will be disciplined using one or more of the following actions:

5.4.2.1 Corrective visit, letter or phone call. A visit, letter or phone call to the Pastor is normally sufficient to address most infractions. A visit or phone call will normally be followed with an e-mail message to provide a written record.

5.4.2.2 Suspension. A Pastor may be suspended from all pastoral duties when there is evidence of dereliction of duty that, in the judgment of the Regional Director, is cause to remove the Pastor from active duty while the matter is investigated. Such suspension is usually short term, with a determination made fairly quickly to reinstate the Pastor, place the Pastor on probation, or terminate the Pastor.

5.4.2.3 Termination. A Pastor may be terminated from pastoral duties if, in the judgment of the Regional Director as confirmed by the Superintendent, a significant dereliction of duty and/or breach of ministerial ethics makes it inappropriate for the individual to serve as a Lead Pastor.

5.4.2.4 Probation. A Pastor may receive probation rather than termination when the nature of the offense warrants it and there is also reason to believe that the Pastor can be rehabilitated in a reasonably short period of time. Probation serves the purpose of alerting the Lead Pastor that they are not meeting performance responsibilities and provides them with a set time frame within which they may demonstrate satisfactory improvement.

When a Pastor is put on probation, the Regional Director will confer with them to discuss the reasons for and the nature of the probation, including requirements for improvement during the probation period. This discussion will be handled in a loving and respectful way, seeking to help the Pastor meet appropriate responsibilities for their performance as Pastor.

As part of this discussion, it will be determined if the Pastor's congregation(s) should be notified about the Pastor's probation. Though notification is often not necessary, depending on the nature of the offense(s), it may be. If notification is deemed (by the Regional Director in consultation with the Superintendent) to be necessary, it will be made by the Regional Director or by his designee in a way that respects the privacy of the involved parties (including the Pastor) while appropriately informing the congregation concerning the terms of the probation.

Probation is typically for a period of three months—a duration usually long enough to provide adequate time for the Pastor to demonstrate improvement in accordance with a list of requirements that will be given to the Pastor by the Regional Director at the beginning of the probation period.

During probation, the Pastor is expected to seek input from the Regional Director regarding improving their job performance. The Regional Director or Pastor may request that another Pastor in a neighboring Pastorate be assigned to assist. At the conclusion of the probation period, one of three actions will be taken:

1) **Cancellation of probation.** If the Pastor has met requirements, probation will end.
2) **Continuation of probation.** If the Pastor has not met requirements, but has shown substantial progress, probation may be extended—up to a maximum total probationary period of six months.
3) **Termination of duties.** If the Pastor has not shown substantial progress in meeting the requirements, their responsibilities as Lead Pastor will be terminated.

5.4.3 Arbitration and church discipline process when the offending party is a congregation

GCI congregations are officially established by action of the denomination in accordance with the policies established in this manual. Should violations of these policies occur, the Regional Director will contact the offending congregation's Contact Person seeking resolution of the problem. Often such matters are remedied through informal communication at this level. If, however, the violations continue, the Regional Director, at his discretion, may call for a meeting of the Contact Person and (if appropriate) the congregation's Advisory Council and/or Leadership Team to discuss the alleged violations. If this meeting does not lead to a cessation of violations, the Regional Director will send formal notification via letter to the Contact Person, specifying a date by which the congregation must cease violations. On that date, the Regional Director will make an ecclesiastical determination concerning the congregation's progress in ceasing the violations. If progress is deemed unsatisfactory, its church charter may be suspended or revoked. When revoked, the congregation ceases to be a GCI congregation and immediately must surrender and return (or vacate) any property owned by the denomination.

5.5 Specific processes for appealing church discipline

GCI members, affiliate members, Lead Pastors and chartered congregations have access to formal processes by which they may appeal ecclesiastical rulings concerning church discipline. This right of appeal is granted both to those being disciplined and to the aggrieved (the offended party in a formal grievance procedure).

5.5.1 Process for members or affiliate members appealing church discipline

If a member or an affiliate member wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their Lead Pastor, they may ask their Regional Director to review the matter. Through informal discussions (often by telephone), the Regional Director will seek to help the appellant find a resolution to their concerns.

If the matter cannot be resolved this way, the Regional Director will call for a meeting (typically by telephone or video conference) where the Regional Director will seek to help the appellant and their Lead Pastor (or equivalent) find a mutually acceptable resolution. Should one not be found this way, the Regional Director will make a final ruling on the matter and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

5.5.2 Process for Lead Pastors appealing church discipline

If a Lead Pastor wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their Regional Director, they may ask the Superintendent to review the matter. The Superintendent will then make a final ruling and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

5.5.3 Process for congregations appealing church discipline

If a congregation wishes to appeal a disciplinary action mandated by their Regional Director, its Lead Pastor (or equivalent) or a member of the Advisory Council may ask the Superintendent to review the matter. The Superintendent will then make a final ruling and notify all parties concerned by telephone or email. This ruling and notification concludes the appeals process.

APPENDIX A
MINISTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. REGIONAL DIRECTORS AND MINISTRY COORDINATORS

A.1 U.S. Regional Directors

GCI's Regional Directors within the United States oversee the Lead Pastors (or equivalent Contact Persons) of GCI's U.S. congregations within geographic regions. Regional Directors report directly to the North America Superintendent and work collaboratively with the National Coordinators of GCI's Church Development Ministries. In their oversight work, Regional Directors provide relational support and supervision extended via telephone, video conferences, email coaching and occasional visits, retreats, and conferences.

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and Elders, including adherence to the Code of Ethics for Elders (Appendix C) and Elder confidentiality issues, all Regional Directors are to meet the following ministry requirements:

1. Model a personal relationship with Jesus to encourage the ongoing spiritual formation of the Pastors.
2. Model a personal love for the lost and commitment to relational evangelism.
3. Establish relationships characterized by love and grace and encourage Pastors to lead their congregations in the same way.
4. Model the Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
5. Offer encouragement and appropriate correction when Pastor behavior/teaching is not expressive of a Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
6. Encourage Pastors and other teachers to understand and teach GCI doctrines and theology summarized in the Statement of Beliefs and in related articles posted at https://www.gci.org/articles/.
7. Encourage Pastors and other preachers and teachers to give transformational expository sermons and Bible studies.
8. Focus on disciple-making in accordance with the GCI ministry model including team-based leadership, collaborative decision-making and the ministry of all believers.
9. Model accountability and teach Pastors to be accountable to those who supervise them and to those who minister with them.
10. Make recommendations to the Home Office concerning ordinations, pastoral hiring and the restructuring, renewing and disbanding of congregations.
11. Encourage Pastors to develop Ministry Leaders and Elders and to multiply disciple-making ministries and contribute to church planting.
12. Encourage Pastors to organize and administer their congregations using ministry teams that operate in accordance with this manual and the *Financial Management Manual*.
13. Represent denominational leadership and be a primary source of communication between congregations and the denomination.
14. Receive the Lead Pastor's monthly church report. Evaluate the report and follow up as needed.
15. File with the Home Office a monthly report that addresses region needs, problems and opportunities.
16. Receive from the Home Office a review of the quarterly and annual financial reports submitted by each congregation. Follow up as needed.
17. Administer grievance, disciplinary, and appeals processes within the region in accordance with chapter 5 of this manual.
18. Be prepared to answer questions from Pastors and others concerning this manual, the *Financial Management Manual*, the *Church Building Manual*, and the *Employee's Handbook*. If needed, questions may be referred to the Home Office or other GCI department such as Information Technology, Legal Services, the Treasurer's office, etc.

A.2 U.S. Ministry Coordinators

Within the United States, GCI has several denominational church development ministries. The coordinators of these ministries report directly to the GCI President and work collaboratively with Home Office staff, the North America Superintendent, and the U.S. Regional Directors.

In addition to meeting the responsibilities of members and Elders (including the Code of Ethics for Elders—Appendix C), the Ministry Coordinators are to meet the following ministry requirements:

1. Model a personal relationship with Jesus to encourage the ongoing spiritual formation of trainees and co-workers.
2. Model and teach love for the lost and commitment to relational evangelism.
3. Establish loving, grace-based relationships with trainees and co-workers.
4. Model and teach the Spirit-led, Word-directed life.
5. Encourage trainees to practice and teach stewardship as an act of worship in all aspects of the use of their time, talent and treasure.
6. Model gospel-centered teaching. All training is to be in agreement with GCI doctrine as summarized in the *Statement of Beliefs* and with GCI Trinitarian, incarnational theology as presented in doctrinal articles posted at GCI.org.
7. Model and teach principles of disciple-making ministry including team-based leadership and the ministry of all believers in accordance with the introduction to this manual and the details set forth at https://resources.gci.org/pathway.
8. Work with Home Office staff and the U.S. Regional Directors to schedule training in regional conferences and sub-regional gatherings. Involve the Regional Directors in this training as appropriate.
9. Serve as a relational representative of the denomination to the trainees: explain and answer questions regarding the denomination's doctrines, theology, policies and procedures (including matters covered in this manual, the *Financial Management Manual*, the *Church Building Manual*, and the *Employee Handbook*).
10. File with the Home Office a monthly report that addresses the activities of the ministry in the prior month.

APPENDIX B
INCORPORATING CONGREGATIONS LOCALLY

The chartered congregations of Grace Communion International in the United States are officially established through the granting of a charter in which the denomination sets forth the basics of the relationship between the denomination and its chartered congregations (refer to Appendix D). Among other rights and privileges, these congregations have the ability to issue tax-deductible receipts for most donations using the denomination's IRS group tax exemption (refer to the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual* for details).

Chartered fellowship groups never incorporate locally and chartered churches do so only in limited, special circumstances using the procedure outlined in this Appendix. Local incorporation generally serves no practical purpose and usually adds significantly to a chartered church's work in order to maintain the corporation and its records in a prudent and lawful manner.

For these reasons, chartered churches should *not* incorporate locally except in the case of congregations who already own or who have decided to purchase a church building or other real estate. In these limited cases, local incorporation is necessary to establish a corporation to hold title to the real property for the benefit of the congregation. This corporation allows the title to be held locally and helps shield the congregation and the denomination from certain liabilities and adverse consequences associated with real property ownership by a local congregation which is not incorporated.

B.1 Forming a local corporation

If a congregation has decided to purchase a church building or other real estate, the Lead Pastor is to contact the Regional Director to discuss the matter. Prior to this contact, the Pastor should review the *Church Building Manual* and the *GCI-USA Financial Management Manual*.

Following this consultation with the Regional Director, if the congregation decides to proceed with the purchase of a building or other real property (such as land on which to build a church building), the Lead Pastor is to contact the denomination's legal department legal.office@gci.org or 980-495-3982 to arrange for local incorporation. The legal department will assist the congregation in drafting and filing appropriate documents and forms that meet relevant legal and denominational requirements.

Note: a congregation is NOT to sign any documents related to the purchase of real property until AFTER the congregation is incorporated locally.

Local incorporation involves being incorporated within the state of California as a non-profit corporation and then being registered as a California nonprofit corporation within the state where the congregation is located. Such incorporation involves the naming of corporate officers and a Board of Directors whose roles within the congregation are explained in this appendix.

B.2 Properly operating a local corporation

Although detailed instructions are beyond the scope of this appendix, following are basic instructions concerning operation of a local corporation under relevant California law and denominational church governance policies.

The GCI standard articles of incorporation and bylaws of denominationally-chartered corporations ("Corporate Documents") require that directors, officers, and committee members of the corporation all be "spiritually affiliated" with the denominational church. This language means they must be *members* in good standing during their tenure, rather than merely *affiliates*. The Corporate Documents state that loss of member status, voluntarily or involuntarily, results in the immediate and automatic removal of the director or officer from their position.

The Officers and Board of Directors of the local corporation conduct the primary work of that corporation. These responsibilities are carried out within the congregation's local governance structure set forth in this manual. Congregations that incorporate locally modify this structure as noted in this appendix. It will be noted that, with local incorporation, certain

congregational leaders take on certain corporate responsibilities and duties.

B.2.1 Requirement of church membership status for directors, officers, and committee members of local corporations

The Corporate Documents require that directors, officers, and committee members of such corporations all be "spiritually affiliated" with the denominational church. This language means that they must be GCI members in good standing during their tenure, rather than GCI affiliates or non-members. The articles state that loss of member status, voluntarily or involuntarily, results in the immediate and automatic removal of the director or officer from their position.

B.2.2 Corporate officers

The current procedure established by the denomination calls for the Lead Pastor to be designated the President and Chairman of the Board of the local corporation, and for the Lead Pastor to then appoint the Board's Directors and Officers. Each local corporation is to have three corporate Officers as follows.

B.2.2.1 President and Chairman of the Board. As just stated**,** the Lead Pastor of the congregation is designated by the denomination to be the President of the corporation and Chairman of the Board of the corporation.

B.2.2.2 Treasurer. The treasurer of the congregation is appointed by the Lead Pastor to be the treasurer of the corporation.

B.2.2.3 Secretary. The Lead Pastor of the congregation appoints the Secretary of the corporation. The congregation's Financial Secretary (if there is one) is a logical choice.

B.2.3 Board of Directors

The Lead Pastor of the congregation appoints the Board of Directors of the corporation. The articles and bylaws of the corporation in current use by the denomination stipulate that the corporation has a minimum of three and a maximum of seven directors at all times. It is GCI policy that the following individuals be appointed to the Board:

- The congregation's Lead Pastor who then serves as the Chairman of the Board (note also that the Lead Pastor serves as the corporation's President).
- All members of the congregation's Finance Committee and general members the Pastor chooses to appoint.
- Because the Board often deals with property (church building) issues, it is appropriate that the congregation's director of facilities (building manager), if there is one, be appointed to the Board.
- Other directors may be appointed by the Lead Pastor who may (at his discretion) solicit advice concerning these appointments from the Advisory Council (though such advice is not legally mandated). Such additional directors would normally be selected from among the congregation's Elders (Pastors) and Ministry Leaders.

B.2.4 Scope of the Officers' and Board's responsibilities

In locally incorporated congregations, the Elders (Pastors) and Ministry Leaders supervise the day-to-day ecclesiastical operations of the congregation. Business operations are then handled by the Officers and Board of the local corporation. Both the ecclesiastical and business functions are under the direct supervision of the congregation's Lead Pastor.

The business operations handled by the Officers and Board of the local corporation are those of the regular financial/business affairs of GCI congregations as set forth in the *Financial Management Manual*, slightly amended in this appendix for locally incorporated congregations. The board makes decisions on such matters through a vote—that decision then being recorded as the official action of the Board.

B.2.5 Compliance with formal procedures

In order to properly run the corporation so as to avoid as much as possible any issues of personal liability later on, the Officers and Directors should be aware of the following basic duties and procedures which operating the corporation entails.

B.2.5.1 Board meetings. The Board of Directors should conduct sufficient meetings to adequately manage the affairs of the corporation. Meetings should be held at least as often as state law requires.

B.2.5.2 Approval of decisions by Board or Executive Committee. No major transactions should be entered into without action by either the Board or the Executive Committee (which is a committee of the Board authorized by resolution or bylaws to

make many decisions without a meeting of the full Board).

B.2.5.3 Meeting minutes. Proper minutes of these meetings should be kept, reviewed and approved by the board.

B.2.5.4 Resolutions and authority. Acts of the corporation should be authorized first. For example, if a decision is reached to re-roof the building someone needs to be authorized to contract for the same. GCI governance authorizes the Lead Pastor and Treasurer to sign contracts, but only if the contract is approved as described in B.2.5.2.

B.2.5.5 Signing documents. Documents signed on behalf of the corporation should be signed clearly showing the corporate entity is the one being bound. For example, if a contract is signed to re-roof the building, the party should sign in their corporate capacity, such as:

> Name of congregation
> By: Jane Doe
> President, and Agent in Fact.

B.2.6 Standards of conduct for officers and directors of the corporation

The officers and directors of the corporation (and any committees of the Board) must meet the standards of conduct in fulfilling their duties that are imposed upon them by law. If they meet these standards, all other things being equal (i.e. the corporate veil is not pierced for some other reason), they can probably avoid personal liability for good faith business decisions – even those that may have an unintended bad result.

The law does not require every business decision to be perfect for the officers and directors to be protected, which would be impossible, but only that they meet the appropriate standards of conduct in reaching their decisions. For example, the directors of a corporation who borrow money for the corporation are protected from ever having to repay the loan from their personal assets – even if the corporation cannot repay – unless it is later proved the directors did not meet their duty of care in making the decision to borrow.

The various standards and duties for officers and directors of a corporation are usually explicitly declared in the state statutes under which the local corporation is formed.

By way of example, the appropriate statutory language for a California religious corporation is, in part, as follows: "A director shall perform the duties of a director… in good faith, in a manner such director believes to be in the best interests of the corporation and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, as is appropriate under the circumstances."

Although the exact wording of such standards of conduct and the precise elements of such standards vary, they can be broken down into three areas: the duty of loyalty, the duty of care and reliance upon the tenets of church faith and doctrine as set forth in this section. Note, however, that it is impossible to convey here all the information needed to properly educate Officers and Board members about these duties. Therefore, the officers and directors of the corporation are advised to engage in an on-going educational process. As part of this process, the denomination's legal department should be contacted for specific questions and for general guidance regarding corporate and legal affairs.

B.2.6.1 Duty of loyalty. When conducting the affairs of the corporation, officers and directors have a duty not to engage in transactions where they put their own interests above those of the corporation. This is known as self-dealing. State statutes usually define conflicts of interest. Refer to the statues for definitions and resolutions of such conflicts (using the California statutes for California corporations registered in your state). The basic principles related to operating in accordance with the duty of loyalty are as follows:

- **Exercise "good faith."** Officers and directors have a duty to fulfill their obligations in what is called "good faith." Good faith means subjective, internal honesty. It is being genuine instead of duplicitous.
- **Operate "in the best interests of the corporation."** This means the decisions of the officers and directors must be in the best interests of the corporation – as opposed, for example, in the best interests of some third party, the Pastor, or even in the best interests of one member of the congregation at the expense of the others or of the corporation as an entity.
- **Avoid conflicts of interests and self-dealing.** Officers and directors have a duty not to use their positions in the corporation to further their own financial interests. State statutes often give

procedures to follow when the subject matter of a proposed corporate action involves a conflict with a director.

B.2.6.2 Duty of care. When conducting the affairs of the corporation, officers and directors have the responsibility to operate according to a "duty of care" that is defined by the following principles. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive.

- **Exercise appropriate care.** Although statutes vary, the law often requires directors to discharge their duties with the care a person in a like position would reasonably believe appropriate under similar circumstances.
- **Attend meetings regularly.** Directors of a corporation have a duty to see to the corporation's business and should, of course, show a pattern of adequate attendance.
- **Obtain sufficient information.** Directors should seek to gather, or have presented to them, all the relevant facts so that they may make sound decisions.
- **Make necessary inquiry.** Directors are expected to be fully engaged in the business that comes before them and to ask relevant questions and receive adequate answers to those questions so as to fully understand the positive and negative potential consequences of their decision.
- **Seek outside counsel or advice when necessary**: Many, perhaps even most, decisions made by the Board are routine and the course to take is obvious to all on the Board. However, there is the right, and sometimes a duty, for directors to get inside and/or outside financial and legal opinions on special or unusual matters that require outside information or expertise before acting or making a decision.

B.2.6.3 Reliance upon church faith and doctrine. For religious corporations, (e.g. California religious corporations) directors sometimes have the right to rely upon the tenets of faith, the opinions of clergy, and spiritual discernment in making their decisions. It cannot be emphasized enough that directors of churches should always include in their deliberations and decisions, and in documenting those decisions, the fact that spiritual considerations are involved, and the decision is consistent therewith. The reasons this is important, among others, is that civil courts can and will evaluate decisions of directors from a business and legal perspective but are not permitted to evaluate the decisions on a spiritual level, thus giving greater protection to the Board in the (hopefully very rare) case where the decision seems imprudent without the spiritual considerations.

B.3 Governance in congregations that are locally incorporated

When a congregation incorporates locally, it alters its governance structures to merge standard GCI church governance roles with certain corporate roles. The Officers and Board of the corporation manage the "business" affairs of the congregation, while the leaders established by the standard church governance structures manage the "ecclesiastical" affairs of the congregation. The nexus of the ecclesiastical and business elements of the church is the Lead Pastor (or equivalent) who supervises both. For example, suppose a Ministry Leader overseen by the Lead Pastor wishes to start a summer camp for teens. The Board, headed by the Lead Pastor as Chairman and President, would then pass appropriate resolutions to receive applications, grant a budget, empower the signing of appropriate contracts, and lease facilities, etc.

Note: the two charts that follow this page show how standard GCI church governance roles are merged with corporate roles in congregations that are locally incorporated.

B.3.1 Management of the *ecclesiastical* affairs of the congregation

Ecclesiastical governance role	The responsibilities for each ecclesiastical governance role
Lead Pastor (working with the other Pastors [Elders] in the congregation)	• Oversees all matters in the congregation • Is accountable to the Regional Director and Home Office in all matters • Receives the advice and counsel of the Advisory Council • Establishes basic direction (vision) for the congregation in collaboration with other congregational leaders • Oversees teaching within the congregation with respect to compliance with GCI doctrine/teachings • Administers disciplinary and grievance processes • Recommends individuals to the denomination to be ordained as Elders • Commissions Ministry Leaders • Oversees development of the congregation's strategic plan • Provides significant input into the development of the annual budget
Advisory Council	• Provides advice and counsel to the Lead Pastor and any other Pastors including advice and counsel related to the annual budget which is prepared and approved and administered by the Board of the corporation
Ministry Leaders	• Coordinate the ministries of the congregation • Are accountable to the Lead Pastor • Appoint, train and supervise the ministry workers in the respective ministry teams • Develop a strategic plan for their respective ministries that is in harmony with the strategic plan for the congregation • Coordinate financial matters related to their respective ministries with the Church Treasurer
Finance Committee	With local incorporation, the role of the Finance Committee is taken on by the Board of Directors of the corporation (which includes the Lead Pastor)

B.3.2 Management of the *business* affairs of the congregation

Corporate governance role	This corporate role is filled by the congregation's existing…	The responsibilities for each corporate role
President of the corporation	Lead Pastor	• Appoints Treasurer, Secretary and Board of Directors • Chairs Board meetings
Treasurer of the corporation	Church treasurer	• Keeps the financial books of the corporation and oversees internal financial systems
Secretary of the corporation	No church corollary—could be filled by the Financial Secretary (if there is one) or another person appointed by the Lead Pastor. The Secretary is normally also a Board member.	• Keeps minutes of Board meetings • Makes reports
Board of Directors of the corporation	Lead Pastor plus the Finance Committee (which is made up of the Treasurer, Lead Counter and Financial Secretary [if there is one], plus, in some cases, additional members).	• Considers and votes on the business of the corporation • Reviews and approves the minutes of meetings of the corporation • Establishes and approves the annual budget (and any amendments thereto) • Oversees the Treasurer, who receives, processes, banks, disburses and monitors the congregation's finances. In this financial work the Treasurer works closely with the congregation's Ministry Leaders, but the primary financial oversight responsibility is that of the Board.

APPENDIX C:
CODE OF ETHICS FOR ELDERS

C.1 Preamble

The Code of Ethics for Elders is designed to edify the body of Christ. We pray it will be embraced by all Elders of the church serving in any and all congregational or administrative responsibilities. The code is intended to be a living document that helps shape our character as we constantly seek to make it better reflect Christ's will for us as Elders in his church.

Ethics provides a framework for how people make decisions and judgments and how we act on them. Decision-making for the Christian is ethical when it is firmly grounded in the Word of God and led by the Holy Spirit, for it is only in these that we find a basis for understanding the will of God.

As church leaders, we must submit ourselves to the Word of God and allow the Holy Spirit to guide us in the application of ethical principles of Scripture. Our Christian conduct must be based on the life and teachings of Jesus, the teachings of biblical writers and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament calls for the highest standard of reputation, ethics and conduct for us as Elders.

As Christian leaders, we recognize that Jesus Christ lives in us through the Holy Spirit. We ask him to change us so that the reality of his resurrected life is evident in our thoughts and actions. The ethical guidelines and principles in this Code of Ethics for Elders are set forth to tie in the realities of our ministerial activities with this transcendent reality of our Christian lives.

Therefore, as Elders in the body of Christ, we must endeavor to conduct our lives according to the spirit of the ethical guidelines and principles set forth in this Code of Ethics for Elders.

C.2 Responsibility to God

Knowing that Jesus Christ is the living Head of the church, I will strive to conduct myself in a manner that brings glory to him. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible servant of God.
- exercise faithful stewardship in my devotional life through the use of spiritual disciplines, the gifts of the Spirit and acts of service.
- exercise faithful stewardship of financial, physical and intellectual resources.
- accept accountability for all my actions and avoid situations that could reflect negatively on the name of Jesus Christ.
- maintain sexual purity.
- exercise Christ's servant-leadership.

C.3 Responsibility of denominational leadership to Elders

In the spirit of Christian brotherhood, denominational supervisors are responsible to provide support as well as just and fair treatment for Elders. This means if I am in a supervisory position, I will strive to:

- be accessible and promptly respond to requests from Elders.
- provide sound and clear spiritual, ecclesiastical and administrative leadership.
- openly and respectfully communicate to Elders any serious complaints brought against them.
- provide reasonable time for feedback to requests for information from Elders.
- handle sensitive and confidential information about an Elder in a responsible manner.
- be sensitive to the personal and family needs of Elders.

C.4 Responsibility to the denomination

As an Elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility of loyalty to ecclesiastical supervisors. This means I will strive to:

- patiently and prayerfully study all doctrinal materials presented by the denomination.
- support and carry out all administrative decisions and policies of ecclesiastical supervisors. If I cannot in good conscience do this, I will immediately notify my supervisors.
- cooperate with, and seek assistance from ecclesiastical supervisors, peers and members of my congregation(s) in order to acquire information and to receive training that is relevant to my assignment as an Elder.
- respect my denomination and be responsible and respectful in discussions about fellow leaders—past and present.
- support and promote the global mission of the church.

C.5 Responsibility to family

I will place my family responsibilities at the highest level of my priorities, second only to my relationship to God. This means I will strive to:

- spiritually, emotionally and physically support my family.
- be faithful to my spouse.
- be a responsible and dedicated parent to my children.

C.6 Relationship with the congregation

I will lead with justice and mercy, striving to express proper balance between strength and gentleness in all situations. This means I will strive to:

- provide sound and clear pastoral, spiritual leadership.
- help members develop spiritual gifts and mentor spiritual leaders in the congregation.
- give sermons that are biblically based, in theological agreement with the church and relevant to the life of the church.
- be committed to prompt reconciliation of interpersonal conflicts. I recognize that I must have personal courage, exercised with appropriate tact in facing opposition. I will encourage members of my congregation to seek help from my peers and/or ecclesiastical supervisors if necessary.
- be trustworthy in all areas of confidentiality, except as I am legally bound to disclose. I will not betray the trust of a member by disclosing personal information about that person to others without that person's knowledge and consent.
- be fair and consistent in my dealings with parishioners.
- honor and respect other cultures, genders and races.

C.7 Responsibility to fellow Elders

As an Elder of Grace Communion International, I have a responsibility to respect and honor my colleagues. I will strive to cooperate with and support my fellow Elders as we work together to further the work of Christ in the church. This means I will strive to:

- respect my fellow Elders and will not speak against them publicly or privately, considering them partners in the work of God.
- respect the administrative boundaries of another Elder's area of responsibility.
- treat the office of an Elder in a manner so as not to be competitive or enhance my own status or position.
- serve my colleagues with counsel, support and personal assistance.

C.8 Responsibility to the greater body of Christ

Elders and members of Grace Communion International are a part of the greater Christian community. This means I will:

- avoid recruiting members out of other churches.
- seek to work in harmony with other Christian leaders and programs to strengthen the body of Christ and advance the kingdom of God.
- uphold the theology and doctrine of Grace Communion International without slandering Christians who hold other views.

C.9 Responsibility to the local community

The local church is an integral part of the society in which it resides. An active, appropriate role in the community serves as a Christian example of love and is a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means I will strive to:

- be a responsible member of my community.
- accept reasonable responsibilities for community service, recognizing this is a function of my public ministry.
- encourage the involvement of the congregation in appropriate community events.
- comply with the laws of my government as long as they do not conflict with the teachings of Jesus.
- take care not to allow political issues to create polarization within the congregation, or to be a focus in sermons, Bible studies, or other church meetings.

APPENDIX D:
CHARTER FOR CHARTERED CHURCHES

Here is the text of the standard charter issued to GCI-USA chartered churches.
The charter for chartered fellowship groups is similar.

BE IT KNOWN TO ALL BY THESE PRESENTS: That, pursuant to an act of Grace Communion International (formerly known as Worldwide Church of God), a California nonprofit, religious corporation with hierarchical governance, (hereinafter the "Denominational Church"), with the consent and approval of the Board of Directors, the Denominational Church hereby issues this Charter to the above-named local church congregation (hereinafter the "Local Congregation").

BE IT FURTHER KNOWN: That, by issuance of this Charter the aforenamed Local Congregation is hereby solemnly declared, pronounced and proclaimed a duly Chartered and authorized subordinate entity of the Denominational Church. Said Local Congregation is entitled to all the benefits, privileges, and honors thereunto appertaining, and is likewise subject to those responsibilities incumbent upon such a Local Congregation, including, but not limited to, adherence to the various proclamations, directives, and doctrinal tenets of the Denominational Church.

MOREOVER: Since the Bible, the Word of God, clearly and unequivocally pronounces unity one of the chief essential characteristics of the Church of God, this Charter evidences, and declares, that said unity does and of a right ought to exist by, between, and among, the Local Congregation, the Denominational Church, and all other duly Chartered local congregations of the Denominational Church wherever and whenever they may be found.

THEREFORE: Based upon these fundamental truths, the Local Congregation is hereby authorized and directed to perform the spiritual duties pursuant to such a status including: to perform sacerdotal functions, conduct worship services, engage in evangelism, aid those in need through ministries in accordance with its mission, and to otherwise proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, all under the aegis of the Denominational Church.

The purposes of this Local Congregation are religious. No substantial part of the activities of this Local Congregation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and it shall not participate in or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

All assets of the Local Congregation are irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes. This Local Congregation is a nonprofit entity, and its assets may not, either while said Local Congregation is in existence or if and when it is ever dissolved, inure to the benefit of any private individual.

All decisions regarding charters and the makeup and recognition of congregations, including, without limitation, the granting of charters, the removal of charters, the combining of congregations into one congregation, and the splitting of one congregation into more than one congregation are ecclesiastical decisions and/or ecclesiastical determinations, as those terms are defined by Denominational Church law, and are in the sole and absolute discretion of the Denominational Church. Upon revocation of this Charter, all assets in which the Local Congregation shall have any interest, tangible and intangible, real, personal and mixed, and wherever located, shall be distributed to the Denominational Church, providing it remains a 501(c)(3) tax exempt, nonprofit corporation, and provided it expressly agrees to accept such assets. Should it agree to accept the same, the assets shall be distributed to the Denominational Church in its own right and not in any representative capacity. The Denominational Church shall in turn distribute such assets, either in kind, or the proceeds from the sale thereof, after deducting all costs and expenses incurred in arranging and carrying out such distribution, to one or more of its chartered, tax exempt, religious congregations, as they are deemed to have need.

In the event the Denominational Church does not, or cannot take title for any reason, then the assets shall be distributed to any 501(c)(3) tax exempt religious organization that the Denominational Church determines in its sole judgment has the same or similar purposes.

In the event two or more chartered congregations are merged by a decision of the Denominational Church, the assets of all affected congregations shall be merged and become the assets of the congregation identified by the Denominational Church as the receiving congregation, or if the merger results in a new congregation distinct from those merged, the assets become those of the congregation identified by the Denominational Church as the new congregation.

In the event a congregation shall split into more than one chartered congregation as a result of a decision of the Denominational Church, the Denominational Church shall determine the proportion of the assets each newly formed congregation shall receive.

All decisions regarding the disposition of assets of a congregation whose charter has been revoked, of a congregation which has been merged with another congregation, or of a congregation which has been split into more than one congregation are ecclesiastical decisions/determinations, and the form in which the assets are accepted, distributed, when they are distributed and how, and the selection of the recipient shall be within the sole and absolute discretion of the Denominational Church, albeit in accordance with this Charter.

By issuing this Charter, the Denominational Church has exercised its spiritual authority and discretion under its internal Denominational Church law, and has taken this action confidently, proudly, and in the good faith belief that this Local Congregation will continue uprightly and in unity with the Denominational Church and all of its local congregations. However, if for any reason the Denominational Church revokes this Charter, said Charter immediately becomes null and void (except for the provisions regarding the distribution of assets), the status it confers is thereby lost, the privileges arising under it cease and the Local Congregation shall forthwith surrender the same.

APPENDIX E:
GCI Pastoral Continuing Education Program Guide

(for primary pastoral leaders in GCI-USA chartered churches)

Utilizing the program outlined in this appendix, Grace Communion International in the United States (GCI-USA), facilitates the continuing education of the primary pastoral leader (Lead Pastor, Co-Pastor, or a Pastoral Team member) within its chartered churches. The program has two primary components: conferences and academic studies.

E.1 Conferences

Regional Directors host regional and sub-regional conferences and/or spiritual retreats to nurture and equip the pastoral leaders within their regions. The primary pastoral leader of each chartered church is expected to attend at least one of these conferences each year and is encouraged to bring other congregational leaders with them when appropriate.

E.2 Academic studies

GCI facilitates academic studies for the primary pastoral leader of each chartered church through online courses offered by Grace Communion Seminary (GCS) and Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM). All Lead Pastors, Co-Pastors and at least one member of each Pastoral Team are expected to take no less than one course each year from one of these institutions (or pre-approved equivalent). Here are options for fulfilling this expectation:

- Lead Pastors under age 60 and with a bachelor's degree are strongly encouraged to enter a GCS master's degree program. If they choose to do so, note that the degree must be completed in eight years (other seminaries have similar requirements), which means taking two GCS courses per year, in most years, to complete the required 14 courses in the allotted time.
- Lead Pastors who do not have a bachelor's degree, or do not wish to pursue a master's degree, but have some college may take GCS courses without pursuing the master's degree (and note that on a limited basis, some Pastors under 60 without a bachelor's degree may be admitted to the master's program). The expectation (see the note above) is that Pastors will take no less than one class each year.
- Lead Pastors (or equivalent) with some or no prior college may take courses at ACCM and work toward earning the ACCM diploma of Christian ministry. ACCM has a flexible time frame for completion. Again, it is expected that Pastors take no less than one class each year.

Once a primary pastoral leader has earned a GCS master's degree or an ACCM diploma, they are encouraged to continue their academic studies by taking pastoral education courses (credit or non-credit—one every two to three years is suggested).

Notes:

1. It is appropriate that the primary pastoral leader be reimbursed by their congregations for costs incurred in meeting the Pastoral Continuing Education Program expectations set forth in this appendix. Reimbursable costs include tuition, textbooks and travel.
2. Regional Directors will monitor the continuing education compliance of the primary pastoral leader in accordance with what is outlined in this appendix. The goal is to encourage and facilitate participation. In extenuating circumstances, Regional Directors will help pastoral leaders find alternative ways to meet these expectations.

E.3 Taking academic courses

The GCI-USA Pastoral Continuing Education Program relies heavily on pastoral leaders taking academic courses related to church-based ministry. Toward that end, GCI-USA is partnered with Grace Communion Seminary (GCS) and Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (ACCM). Below is a representative sequence of GCS courses leading to the master's degree in pastoral studies, and a list of the courses currently offered by ACCM leading to the diploma of Christian Ministry.

E.3.1 Grace Communion Seminary (https://www.gcs.edu/)

Below is a representative sequence of 14 GCS courses leading to the master's degree in pastoral studies (other degree programs and courses are offered, and other sequences are possible based on need and interest). For those taking GCS courses but not pursuing a master's degree, a similar sequence is suggested depending on need and interest. Note that not all courses are offered each year—the GCS registrar can advise on availability, sequencing and related matters.

- TH501: Nature of God and Jesus Christ
- BI501 Hermeneutics
- CM501: Ministerial Leadership
- TH502: Nature of Humans and Salvation
- TH503: The Holy Spirit, the Church, and Eschatology
- BI523: Acts of the Apostles
- CH501: Church History: The First Millennium
- CM503: Christian Counseling
- BI524: Epistles of Paul
- CM504: Practice of Ministry
- CM511: Homiletics
- CM508: Church Planting and Development or CM506: Trinitarian Youth Ministry
- TM501: Capstone course (includes summative exam and capstone project)

E.3.2 Ambassador College of Christian Ministry (http://www.ambascol.org/)

ACCM currently offers the ten courses listed below. These may be taken in any sequence. Upon completion of all ten courses, the student is awarded ACCM's diploma of Christian ministry.

- Doctrines
- Jesus and the Gospels
- Spiritual Formation
- Christian Leadership
- The Bible
- Effective Communication
- Worship
- Preaching
- Pastoral Care
- Applied Christian Ministry (must be completed last)